



Leading in the Lord's Way

*"I teach them correct principles,
and they govern themselves."*

From the Life of Joseph Smith

While the Saints in Kirtland began working and sacrificing to build a temple in their midst, the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri, were facing severe persecution. As increasing numbers of Church members moved to Missouri, tensions grew with long-time settlers. The Missourians feared losing political control, they were suspicious of the Church's unfamiliar religious beliefs, and they disliked the Saints' tendency to trade among themselves. Mobs became increasingly violent in their persecution of the Saints and, in November 1833, forced them out of their homes. Leaving most of their livestock and household belongings behind, the Saints fled north, primarily to Clay County, Missouri, where they found refuge for a time.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, who was living in Kirtland, was deeply concerned about the sufferings of the Saints in Missouri, and he longed to help them. In February 1834, the Lord revealed to him that he should organize a group of Saints to march to Jackson County. This group, called Zion's Camp, was to help recover the lands and property illegally taken from Church members. (See D&C 103:21–40.) The camp was officially organized on May 6, 1834, and eventually included over 200 people. The marchers, who were armed and organized as a military body, arrived near Jackson County in the middle of June, after traveling more than 900 miles.

The members of the camp walked long distances each day, often in oppressive heat with only inadequate food and bad water to sustain them. The close association with one another over many



Leaders in the Lord's kingdom "should be endowed with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, in order to teach and lead the people of God."

weeks of travel, accompanied by weariness and hunger, led some of the men to quarrel with one another and criticize the Prophet.

Despite all the problems of this dangerous and difficult trip, Joseph Smith taught the members of the camp important principles of leadership as he led them day by day. Wilford Woodruff, a member of Zion's Camp who later became the fourth President of the Church, declared: "We gained an experience that we never could have gained in any other way. We had the privilege of beholding the face of the Prophet, and we had the privilege of traveling a thousand miles with him, and seeing the workings of the Spirit of God with him, and the revelations of Jesus Christ unto him and the fulfillment of those revelations."¹

After the group arrived in Missouri, they began negotiations with state officials, but these attempts at peaceful resolution failed. When armed conflict seemed inevitable, the Prophet prayed for guidance and, on June 22, 1834, received a revelation disbanding the camp and declaring that Zion could not be redeemed at that time (see D&C 105). Concerning the members of the camp the Lord said, "I have heard their prayers, and will accept their offering; and it is expedient in me that they should be brought thus far for a trial of their faith" (D&C 105:19).

Zion's Camp did not accomplish its political objectives, but it had long-lasting spiritual results. In February 1835, when the Prophet organized the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Quorum of the Seventy, nine of the Twelve Apostles and all of the Seventy had served in Zion's Camp. As recalled by Joseph Young, one of the original members of the Seventy, the Prophet explained to a group of these brethren: "God did not want you to fight. He could not organize His kingdom with twelve men to open the Gospel door to the nations of the earth, and with seventy men under their direction to follow in their tracks, unless He took them from a body of men who had offered their lives, and who had made as great a sacrifice as did Abraham."²

It was in Zion's Camp that Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Wilford Woodruff, and others gained practical training that enabled them to lead the Saints from Missouri to Illinois in 1839 and later to the Salt Lake Valley. From their experience with the Prophet, these brethren had learned to lead in the Lord's way.

Teachings of Joseph Smith

Leaders teach correct principles and help those they lead learn to govern themselves.

John Taylor, the third President of the Church, reported: “Some years ago, in Nauvoo, a gentleman in my hearing, a member of the Legislature, asked Joseph Smith how it was that he was enabled to govern so many people, and to preserve such perfect order; remarking at the same time that it was impossible for them to do it anywhere else. Mr. Smith remarked that it was very easy to do that. ‘How?’ responded the gentleman; ‘to us it is very difficult.’ Mr. Smith replied, ‘I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves.’”³

Brigham Young, the second President of the Church, reported: “The question was asked a great many times of Joseph Smith, by gentlemen who came to see him and his people, ‘How is it that you can control your people so easily? It appears that they do nothing but what you say; how is it that you can govern them so easily?’ Said he, ‘I do not govern them at all. The Lord has revealed certain principles from the heavens by which we are to live in these latter days. The time is drawing near when the Lord is going to gather out His people from the wicked, and He is going to cut short His work in righteousness, and the principles which He has revealed I have taught to the people and they are trying to live according to them, and they control themselves.’”⁴

In response to an accusation that he was seeking power, Joseph Smith said: “In relation to the power over the minds of mankind which I hold, I would say, It is in consequence of the power of truth in the doctrines which I have been an instrument in the hands of God of presenting unto them, and not because of any compulsion on my part. . . . I ask, Did I ever exercise any compulsion over any man? Did I not give him the liberty of disbelieving any doctrine I have preached, if he saw fit? Why do not my enemies strike a blow at the doctrine? They cannot do it: it is truth, and I defy all men to upset it.”⁵

“A brother who works in the *St. Louis Gazette* office . . . wanted to know by what principle I got so much power. . . . I told him

I obtained power on the principles of truth and virtue, which would last when I was dead and gone.”⁶

**Leaders receive the wisdom they need from the Spirit
and acknowledge the Lord’s blessings to them.**

“A man of God should be endowed with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, in order to teach and lead the people of God.”⁷

Joseph Smith wrote to members of the Quorum of the Twelve and other priesthood leaders who were serving missions in Great Britain: “I can say, that as far as I have been made acquainted with your movements, I am perfectly satisfied that they have been in wisdom; and I have no doubt, but that the Spirit of the Lord has directed you; and this proves to my mind that you have been humble, and your desires have been for the salvation of your fellow man, and not for your own aggrandizement, and selfish interests. As long as the Saints manifest such a disposition, their counsels will be approved of, and their exertions crowned with success.

“There are many things of much importance, on which you ask counsel, but which I think you will be perfectly able to decide upon, as you are more conversant with the peculiar circumstances than I am; and I feel great confidence in your united wisdom. . . .

“Beloved brethren, you must be aware in some measure of my feelings, when I contemplate the great work which is now rolling on, and the relationship which I sustain to it, while it is extending to distant lands, and thousands are embracing it. I realize in some measure my responsibility, and the need I have of support from above, and wisdom from on high, that I may be able to teach this people, which have now become a great people, the principles of righteousness, and lead them agreeable to the will of Heaven; so that they may be perfected, and prepared to meet the Lord Jesus Christ when He shall appear in great glory. Can I rely on your prayers to our heavenly Father on my behalf, and on all the prayers of all my brethren and sisters in England, (whom having not seen, yet I love), that I may be enabled to escape every stratagem of Satan, surmount every difficulty, and bring

this people to the enjoyment of those blessings which are reserved for the righteous? I ask this at your hands in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸

In 1833 the Prophet and other Church leaders wrote to members in Thompson, Ohio, telling them that Brother Salmon Gee had been appointed to preside over them: “Our beloved Brother Salmon . . . has been ordained by us . . . to lead you and to teach the things which are according to godliness, in whom we have great confidence, as we presume also you have. We therefore say to you—yea, not us only, but the Lord also—receive you him as such, knowing that the Lord has appointed him to this office for your good, holding him up by your prayers, praying for him continually that he may be endowed with wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of the Lord, that through him you may be kept from evil spirits, and all strifes and dissensions, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

“. . . Finally, brethren, pray for us, that we may be enabled to do the work whereunto we are called, that you may enjoy the mysteries of God, even a fulness.”⁹

The Prophet gave the following counsel to a group of priesthood leaders to guide them in their discussions: “Each should speak in his turn and in his place, and in his time and season, that there may be perfect order in all things; and . . . every man . . . should be sure that he can throw light upon the subject rather than spread darkness, . . . which may be done by men applying themselves closely to study the mind and will of the Lord, whose Spirit always makes manifest and demonstrates the truth to the understanding of all who are in possession of the Spirit.”¹⁰

“When the Twelve or any other witnesses stand before the congregations of the earth, and they preach in the power and demonstration of the Spirit of God, and the people are astonished and confounded at the doctrine, and say, ‘That man has preached a powerful discourse, a great sermon,’ then let that man or those men take care that they do not ascribe the glory unto themselves, but be careful that they are humble, and ascribe the praise and glory to God and the Lamb; for it is by the power of the Holy Priesthood and the Holy Ghost that they have power

thus to speak. What art thou, O man, but dust? And from whom receivest thou thy power and blessings, but from God?"¹¹

Leaders in the Lord's kingdom love those they serve.

"As I grow older, my heart grows tenderer for you. I am at all times willing to give up everything that is wrong, for I wish this people to have a virtuous leader. I have set your minds at liberty by letting you know the things of Christ Jesus. . . . I have nothing in my heart but good feelings."¹²

"Sectarian priests cry out concerning me, and ask, 'Why is it this babbler gains so many followers, and retains them?' I answer, It is because I possess the principle of love. All I can offer the world is a good heart and a good hand."¹³

A few days before he went to Carthage Jail, the Prophet expressed his love for the Saints: "God has tried you. You are a good people; therefore I love you with all my heart. Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his friends [see John 15:13]. You have stood by me in the hour of trouble, and I am willing to sacrifice my life for your preservation."¹⁴

Leaders in the Lord's kingdom teach through their service and example.

As the members of Zion's Camp marched from Kirtland, Ohio, to Missouri, they learned many leadership principles from their association with Joseph Smith. George A. Smith, a member of Zion's Camp, recalled: "The Prophet Joseph took a full share of the fatigues of the entire journey. In addition to the care of providing for the Camp and presiding over it, he walked most of the time and had a full proportion of blistered, bloody, and sore feet, which was the natural result of walking from 25 to 40 miles a day in a hot season of the year. But during the entire trip he never uttered a murmur or complaint, while most of the men in the Camp complained to him of sore toes, blistered feet, long drives, scanty supply of provisions, poor quality of bread, bad corn dodger [corn bread], frowsy [spoiled] butter, strong honey, maggoty bacon and cheese, etc. Even a dog could not bark at some men without their murmuring at Joseph. If they had to camp



“The Propbet was the first man at the rope in his bare feet,” recalled a member of Zion’s Camp. “This was characteristic of him in all times of difficulty.”

with bad water, it would nearly cause rebellion. Yet we were the Camp of Zion, and many of us were prayerless, thoughtless, careless, heedless, foolish, or devilish, and yet we did not know it. Joseph had to bear with us and tutor us like children. There were many, however, in the Camp who never murmured and who were always ready and willing to do as our leader desired.”¹⁵

*The following are excerpts from the Propbet’s history for May 1834: “Every night before retiring to rest, at the sound of the trumpet, we bowed before the Lord in the several tents, and presented our thank-offerings with prayer and supplication; and at the sound of the morning trumpet, about four o’clock, every man was again on his knees before the Lord, imploring His blessing for the day.”*¹⁶

May 27, 1834: “Notwithstanding our enemies were continually breathing threats of violence, we did not fear, neither did we hesitate to prosecute our journey, for God was with us, and His angels went before us, and the faith of our little band was

unwavering. We know that angels were our companions, for we saw them.”¹⁷

May 29, 1834: “I discovered that a part of my company had been served with sour bread, while I had received good, sweet bread from the same cook. I reproved Brother Zebedee Coltrin for this partiality, for I wanted my brethren to fare as well as I did.”¹⁸

John M. Chidester, a member of Zion’s Camp, recalled: “Zion’s Camp, in passing through the State of Indiana, had to cross very bad swamps; consequently we had to attach ropes to the wagons to help them through, and the Prophet was the first man at the rope in his bare feet. This was characteristic of him in all times of difficulty.

“We continued our journey until we reached the [Wakenda] River, having traveled twenty-five miles without resting or eating. We were compelled to ferry this stream; and we found on the opposite side of it a most desirable place to camp, which was a source of satisfaction to the now weary and hungry men. On reaching this place the Prophet announced to the Camp that he felt impressed to travel on; and taking the lead, he invited the brethren to follow him.

“This caused a split in the camp. Lyman Wight and others at first refused to follow the Prophet, but finally came up. The sequel showed that the Prophet was inspired to move on a distance of some seven miles. It was reported to us afterwards that about eight miles below where we crossed the river a body of men was organized to come upon us that night.”¹⁹

During the march of Zion’s Camp, some of the participants murmured and complained. The Prophet chastised those involved and warned that disaster would strike if they did not repent. Although some heeded his counsel, others did not. Soon cholera broke out, and some members of the camp died. Orson Hyde, who later served in the Quorum of the Twelve, recalled: “Did the Prophet cease his anxiety for the welfare of the camp? Did he become alienated in his feelings from his friends in their hour of chastisement and tribulation? Did he turn to be their enemy because he had spoken hard things against them? No! His heart

was melted with sympathy—his bosom glowed with love, compassion and kindness; and with a zeal and fidelity that became a devoted friend in the hour of peril, he personally ministered to the sick and dying; and aided in burying the dead. Every act of his during that severe trial gave additional assurances to the camp that with all their faults, he loved them still.”²⁰

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages vii–xii.

- Read the first paragraph on page 284. What strengths do you see in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s approach to leadership? How do you think most people respond to such leadership?
- Review the Prophet’s teachings about the need for leaders to receive wisdom from the Spirit (pages 285–87). What can help leaders receive the wisdom they need?
- Review the second full paragraph on page 285. Why are humility and selflessness essential characteristics for leaders? What other characteristics do you think leaders should have?
- Joseph Smith spoke openly of his love and tender feelings for the Saints (page 287). How do you know when a leader truly loves you? When have you been blessed through the love of a leader?
- Study the reports of Zion’s Camp on pages 281–83 and 287–90. What qualities of leadership did the Prophet demonstrate?
- Think about your leadership responsibilities in your family, the Church, your profession, your school, the community, or elsewhere. Consider what you can do to follow Joseph Smith’s example.

Related Scriptures: Exodus 18:13–26; Proverbs 29:2; Matthew 20:25–28; Alma 1:26; D&C 107:99–100

Notes

1. Wilford Woodruff, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, Dec. 21, 1869, p. 1; spelling and capitalization modernized.
2. Quoted by Joseph Young Sr., in *History of the Church*, 2:182, footnote; from Joseph Young Sr., *History of the Organization of the Seventies* (1878), p. 14.
3. John Taylor, "The Organization of the Church," *Millennial Star*, Nov. 15, 1851, p. 339.
4. Brigham Young, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, June 7, 1870, p. 3.
5. *History of the Church*, 6:273; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Mar. 24, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Wilford Woodruff.
6. *History of the Church*, 6:343; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Apr. 25, 1844, Nauvoo, Illinois.
7. *History of the Church*, 5:426; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on June 11, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Wilford Woodruff and Willard Richards.
8. *History of the Church*, 4:228–30; spelling and grammar modernized; from a letter from Joseph Smith to the Twelve, Dec. 15, 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Jan. 1, 1841, pp. 259–60; this letter is incorrectly dated Oct. 19, 1840, in *History of the Church*.
9. Letter from Joseph Smith and others to Church members in Thompson, Ohio, Feb. 6, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio; Letter Book 1, 1829–35, pp. 25–26, Joseph Smith, Collection, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
10. *History of the Church*, 2:370; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Jan. 15, 1836, Kirtland, Ohio.
11. *History of the Church*, 3:384; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on July 2, 1839, in Montrose, Iowa; reported by Wilford Woodruff and Willard Richards.
12. *History of the Church*, 6:412; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on May 26, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Thomas Bullock.
13. *History of the Church*, 5:498; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on July 9, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Willard Richards; see also appendix, page 562, item 3.
14. *History of the Church*, 6:500; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on June 18, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois. The compilers of *History of the Church* combined verbal reports by several eyewitnesses into a single account of the discourse.
15. George A. Smith, "History of George Albert Smith by Himself," p. 30, George Albert Smith, Papers, 1834–75, Church Archives.
16. *History of the Church*, 2:64–65; from Heber C. Kimball, "Elder Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons*, Jan. 15, 1845, p. 771.
17. *History of the Church*, 2:73; from Heber C. Kimball, "Elder Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons*, Jan. 15, 1845, p. 772.
18. *History of the Church*, 2:75; from George A. Smith, "History of George Albert Smith by Himself," p. 17, George Albert Smith, Papers, 1834–75, Church Archives.
19. John M. Chidester, in "Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith," *Juvenile Instructor*, Mar. 1, 1892, p. 151; punctuation modernized.
20. Orson Hyde, *Deseret News*, July 30, 1853, p. 66.