



Living with Others in Peace and Harmony

“We want to live in peace with all men.”

From the Life of Joseph Smith

One of the desires of the early Latter-day Saints was simply to be allowed to live their religion in peace. But wherever they moved, peace eluded them. In 1833, just two years after the dedication of a place of gathering in Missouri, mobs forced the Saints to leave Jackson County, Missouri (see page 281). Church members found temporary refuge in Clay County, Missouri, and then, in 1836, began moving into northern Missouri. Most of them settled in Caldwell County, a new county organized by the state legislature to accommodate the Saints. Far West, which served as the county seat, soon became a thriving Latter-day Saint settlement.

The Prophet Joseph Smith had continued to live in Kirtland, Ohio, but in January 1838, he was forced to leave, fearing for his life. With his family, he traveled the 900 miles to Far West, where he joined the Saints living there. Later in 1838, most of the Kirtland Saints sold or abandoned their homes and followed the Prophet to Missouri. To accommodate the Church members pouring into the area, the Prophet designated areas near Far West where the Saints could settle. In July 1838, cornerstones were dedicated for a temple in Far West, giving the Saints hope that they could establish a permanent settlement where they could enjoy prosperity and peace. Unfortunately, tensions similar to those they experienced in Jackson County soon divided them from local settlers, and in the fall of 1838, mobs and militia once again began to harass and attack Latter-day Saints.

One day the Prophet was visiting his parents' home in Far West, when a group of armed militiamen came in and announced



In Far West, Missouri, when a group of armed militiamen came to arrest Joseph Smith, he "looked upon them with a very pleasant smile and, stepping up to them, gave each of them his hand."

that they had come to kill him for a supposed crime. Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet's mother, described his gift for peacemaking:

“[Joseph] looked upon them with a very pleasant smile and, stepping up to them, gave each of them his hand in a manner which convinced them that he was neither a guilty criminal nor yet a cowering hypocrite. They stopped and stared as though a spectre had crossed their path.

“Joseph sat down and entered into conversation with them and explained to them the views and feelings of the people called Mormons and what their course had been, as also the treatment which they had met with from their enemies since the first outset of the Church. He told them that malice and detraction had pursued them ever since they entered Missouri, but they were a people who had never broken the laws to his knowledge. But if they had, they stood ready to be tried by the law. . . .

“After this, he rose and said, ‘Mother, I believe I will go home. Emma will be expecting me.’ Two of the men sprang to their feet, saying, ‘You shall not go alone, for it is not safe. We will go with you and guard you.’ Joseph thanked them, and they went with him.

“The remainder of the officers stood by the door while these were absent, and I overheard the following conversation between them:

“First Officer: ‘Did you not feel strangely when Smith took you by the hand? I never felt so in my life.’

“Second Officer: ‘I felt as though I could not move. I would not harm one hair of that man's head for the whole world.’

“Third Officer: ‘This is the last time you will ever catch me coming to kill Joe Smith or the Mormons either.’ . . .

“Those men who went with my son promised to go disband the militia under them and go home, and said that if he had any use for them, they would come back and follow him anywhere.”¹

Speaking the truth in a kind, forthright way, Joseph Smith overcame prejudice and hostility and made peace with many of those who had been his enemies.

Teachings of Joseph Smith

By striving to be peacemakers, we can live in greater harmony and love with others.

“Jesus said: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.’ [Matthew 5:9.] Wherefore if the nation, a single State, community, or family ought to be grateful for anything, it is peace.

“Peace, lovely child of heaven!—peace like light from the same great parent, gratifies, animates, and happifies the just and the unjust, and is the very essence of happiness below, and bliss above.

“He that does not strive with all his powers of body and mind, with all his influence at home and abroad—and cause others to do so too—to seek peace and maintain it for his own benefit and convenience, and for the honor of his State, nation, and country, has no claim on the clemency [mercy] of man; nor should he be entitled to the friendship of woman or the protection of government.

“He is the canker-worm to gnaw his own vitals; and the vulture to prey upon his own body; and he is, as to his own prospects and prosperity in life, a [destroyer] of his own pleasure.

“A community of such beings are not far from hell on earth, and should be let alone as unfit for the smiles of the free or praise of the brave.

“But the peacemaker, O give ear to him! for the words of his mouth and his doctrine drop like the rain, and distil as the dew. They are like the gentle mist upon the herbs, and as the moderate shower upon the grass.

“Animation, virtue, love, contentment, philanthropy, benevolence, compassion, humanity and friendship push life into bliss; and men, a little below the angels, exercising their powers, privileges, and knowledge according to the order, rules, and regulations of revelation, by Jesus Christ, dwell together in unity; and the sweet odor that is wafted by the breath of joy and satisfaction from their righteous communion is like the rich perfume from the consecrated oil that was poured upon the head of Aaron, or



*In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior taught, “Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called the children of God.”*

like the luscious fragrance that rises from the field of Arabian spices. Yea, more, the voice of the peacemaker—

“It is like the music of the spheres—
It charms our souls and calms our fears;
It turns the world to Paradise,
And men to pearls of greater price.”²

“Brethren beloved, continue in brotherly love; walk in meekness, watching unto prayer, that you be not overcome. Follow after peace, as said our beloved brother Paul, that you may be the children of our Heavenly Father [see Romans 14:19].”³

“Humanity towards all, reason and refinement to enforce virtue, and good for evil are . . . eminently designed to cure more disorders of society than an appeal to arms, or even argument untempered with friendship. . . . Our motto, then, is Peace with all! If we have joy in the love of God, let us try to give a reason of that joy, which all the world cannot gainsay or resist.”⁴

“We want to live in peace with all men.”⁵

**We can cultivate peace by honoring one another
and refusing to find fault.**

“We [hope that] our brethren will be careful of one another’s feelings, and walk in love, honoring one another more than themselves, as is required by the Lord.”⁶

“The man who willeth to do well, we should extol his virtues, and speak not of his faults behind his back.”⁷

“Now, in this world, mankind are naturally selfish, ambitious and striving to excel one above another; yet some are willing to build up others as well as themselves.”⁸

“Let the Twelve and all Saints be willing to confess all their sins, and not keep back a part; and let [them] be humble, and not be exalted, and beware of pride, and not seek to excel one above another, but act for each other’s good, and pray for one another, and honor our brother or make honorable mention of his name, and not backbite and devour our brother.”⁹

“If you will put away from your midst all evil speaking, backbiting, and ungenerous thoughts and feelings: humble yourselves, and cultivate every principle of virtue and love, then will the blessings of Jehovah rest upon you, and you will yet see good and glorious days; peace will be within your gates, and prosperity in your borders.”¹⁰

**We can cultivate harmony in our communities by
respecting the freedom of all people to believe
according to their own conscience.**

Articles of Faith 1:11: “We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”¹¹

“We deem it a just principle, and it is one the force of which we believe ought to be duly considered by every individual, that all men are created equal, and that all have the privilege of thinking for themselves upon all matters relative to conscience. Consequently, then, we are not disposed, had we the power, to deprive any one of exercising that free independence of mind which

heaven has so graciously bestowed upon the human family as one of its choicest gifts.”¹²

“I have the most liberal sentiments, and feelings of charity towards all sects, parties, and denominations; and the rights and liberties of conscience, I hold most sacred and dear, and despise no man for differing with me in matters of opinion.”¹³

“The Saints can testify whether I am willing to lay down my life for my brethren. If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a ‘Mormon,’ I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.

“It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race. Love of liberty was diffused into my soul by my grandfathers while they dandled me on their knees. . . .

“If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear them down? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better; and I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do, only by the force of reasoning, for truth will cut its own way.”¹⁴

“We ought always to be aware of those prejudices which sometimes so strangely present themselves, and are so congenial to human nature, against our friends, neighbors, and brethren of the world, who choose to differ from us in opinion and in matters of faith. Our religion is between us and our God. Their religion is between them and their God.”¹⁵

“When we see virtuous qualities in men, we should always acknowledge them, let their understanding be what it may in relation to creeds and doctrine; for all men are, or ought to be free, possessing unalienable rights, and the high and noble qualifications of the laws of nature and of self-preservation, to think and act and say as they please, while they maintain a due respect

to the rights and privileges of all other creatures, infringing upon none. This doctrine I do most heartily subscribe to and practice.”¹⁶

“All persons are entitled to their agency, for God has so ordained it. He has constituted mankind moral agents, and given them power to choose good or evil; to seek after that which is good, by pursuing the pathway of holiness in this life, which brings peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a fulness of joy and happiness at His right hand hereafter; or to pursue an evil course, going on in sin and rebellion against God, thereby bringing condemnation to their souls in this world, and an eternal loss in the world to come. Since the God of heaven has left these things optional with every individual, we do not wish to deprive them of it. We only wish to act the part of a faithful watchman, agreeable to the word of the Lord to Ezekiel the prophet (Ezekiel chap. 33, verses 2, 3, 4, 5), and leave it for others to do as seemeth them good.”¹⁷

“It is one of the first principles of my life, and one that I have cultivated from my childhood, having been taught it by my father, to allow every one the liberty of conscience. . . . In my feelings I am always ready to die for the protection of the weak and oppressed in their just rights.”¹⁸

“Meddle not with any man for his religion: all governments ought to permit every man to enjoy his religion unmolested. No man is authorized to take away life in consequence of difference of religion, which all laws and governments ought to tolerate and protect, right or wrong.”¹⁹

“We will . . . cultivate peace and friendship with all, mind our own business, and come off with flying colors, respected, because, in respecting others, we respect ourselves.”²⁰

“Although I never feel to force my doctrine upon any person, I rejoice to see prejudice give way to truth, and the traditions of men dispersed by the pure principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”²¹

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.

- Review the story of Joseph Smith speaking with members of the militia (pages 339–41). Why do you think the Prophet was able to stay calm in this situation? Consider other examples you have seen of people remaining calm and peaceful in difficult situations. What resulted from the actions of these people?
- Review pages 342–43, looking for words and phrases the Prophet used to describe peace and peacemakers. What characteristics can help us be peacemakers in our homes and communities?
- Read the second paragraph on page 344. How do you feel when you look for others’ faults? How do you feel when you look for the virtuous qualities in others? How do you think other people feel when you take time to acknowledge their virtuous qualities?
- Read the third paragraph on page 344. In what ways can we build up one another? What have other people done to build you up? In what ways do such actions lead to peace?
- Review pages 344–46, looking for the Prophet’s teachings about how we should treat people whose religious beliefs differ from our own. What are ways we can honor the rights of others to “worship how, where, or what they may”?
- Read the last paragraph on page 346. How can we share the restored gospel with others while also showing respect for their beliefs?

Related Scriptures: Ephesians 4:31–32; Mosiah 4:9–16; 4 Nephi 1:15–16; D&C 134:2–4, 7

Notes

1. Lucy Mack Smith, “The History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet,” 1844–45 manuscript, book 15, pp. 8–10, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. *History of the Church*, 6:245–46; punctuation and grammar modernized; from “A Friendly Hint to Missouri,” an article written under the direction of Joseph Smith, Mar. 8, 1844, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in

- Times and Seasons*, Mar. 15, 1844, p. 473.
3. Letter from Joseph Smith and others to Church members in Thompson, Ohio, Feb. 6, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio; Letter Book 1, 1829–35, p. 26, Joseph Smith, Collection, Church Archives.
 4. *History of the Church*, 6:219–20; paragraph divisions altered; from “Pacific Innuendo,” an article written under the direction of Joseph Smith, Feb. 17, 1844, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Feb. 15, 1844, p. 443; this issue of the *Times and Seasons* was published late.
 5. *History of the Church*, 2:122; from a letter from Joseph Smith and others to John Lincoln and others, June 21, 1834, Clay County, Missouri, published in *Evening and Morning Star*, July 1834, p. 176.
 6. *History of the Church*, 1:368; from a letter from Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency to William W. Phelps and the brethren in Missouri, June 25, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio.
 7. *History of the Church*, 1:444; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Nov. 19, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio.
 8. *History of the Church*, 5:388; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on May 14, 1843, in Yelrome, Illinois; reported by Wilford Woodruff.
 9. *History of the Church*, 3:383–84; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on July 2, 1839, in Montrose, Iowa; reported by Wilford Woodruff and Willard Richards.
 10. *History of the Church*, 4:226; from a letter from Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith to the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, Oct. 19, 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois.
 11. Articles of Faith 1:11.
 12. *History of the Church*, 2:6–7; from “The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad,” Jan. 22, 1834, published in *Evening and Morning Star*, Feb. 1834, p. 135.
 13. Letter from Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, Mar. 22, 1839, Liberty Jail, Liberty, Missouri, published in *Times and Seasons*, Feb. 1840, pp. 55–56.
 14. *History of the Church*, 5:498–99; 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.
 15. *History of the Church*, 3:303–4; from a letter from Joseph Smith and others to Edward Partridge and the Church, Mar. 20, 1839, Liberty Jail, Liberty, Missouri.
 16. *History of the Church*, 5:156; punctuation modernized; paragraph divisions altered; from a letter from Joseph Smith to James Arlington Bennet, Sept. 8, 1842, Nauvoo, Illinois; James Bennet’s last name is incorrectly spelled “Bennet” in *History of the Church*.
 17. *History of the Church*, 4:45, footnote; punctuation modernized; paragraph divisions altered; from a letter from the First Presidency and high council to the Saints living west of Kirtland, Ohio, Dec. 8, 1839, Commerce, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Dec. 1839, p. 29.
 18. *History of the Church*, 6:56–57; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Oct. 15, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Willard Richards; see also appendix, page 562, item 3.
 19. *History of the Church*, 6:304; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 7, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, Thomas Bullock, and William Clayton; see also appendix, page 562, item 3.
 20. *History of the Church*, 6:221; from a letter from Joseph Smith to the editor of the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, Feb. 10, 1844, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, Feb. 21, 1844; this letter is incorrectly dated Feb. 19, 1844, in *History of the Church*.
 21. *History of the Church*, 6:213; punctuation modernized; from a letter from Joseph Smith to Joseph L. Heywood, Feb. 13, 1844, Nauvoo, Illinois.