



Joseph Smith Prophet of the Restoration

By Diane Nichols

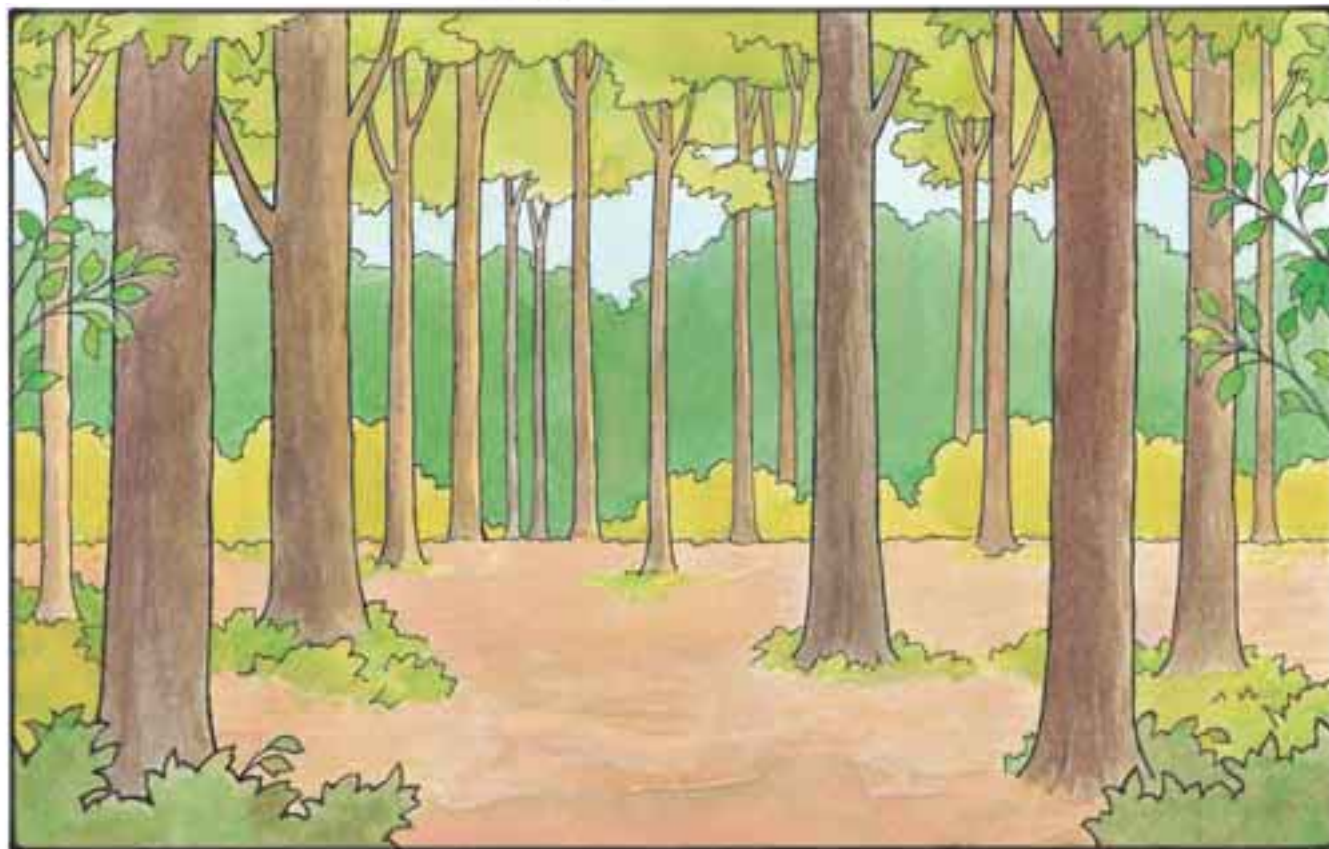
And I have sent forth the fulness of my gospel by the hand of my servant Joseph (Doctrine and Covenants 35:17).

about it but were still not sure what you should do. When Joseph Smith was fourteen years old, he had a question. He was living on his family's farm in Palmyra, New York. In the town where they lived,

Have you ever really wondered about what to do in a certain situation? Or really wanted to know the answer to a question? Perhaps you asked your parents or your friends or teachers

there was a great deal of excitement about religion. There were many preachers from many different churches. Each said that he had the truth and tried to convince people to join his church. Joseph wondered which of the churches he should join. He asked himself, "What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" (Joseph Smith—History 1:10.)

One day Joseph read in the Bible, "If any of you





lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Joseph decided to do what the scripture said. He decided to ask Heavenly Father which church was right so that he would know which one he should join.

Joseph had never prayed out loud before. He decided to go to a grove of trees near his home to ask Heavenly Father his question. On a beautiful spring morning, he walked into the grove, looked around

to be sure that he was alone, and knelt in prayer. As he began his prayer, a terrible feeling of darkness surrounded him. It was so strong that he thought it was going to destroy him! He prayed with all his heart to Heavenly Father for help. At that moment, a pillar of light appeared over his head and came down and rested on him. The darkness left him, and he saw two Heavenly Beings standing above him in the air. One spoke to him, saying, *"This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"* (Joseph Smith—History 1:17.)

The two Heavenly Beings were Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The Savior told Joseph that he should not join any of the churches because they were all wrong. Joseph had the answer to his question. Later he received visits from other heavenly messengers and learned what Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ wanted him to do to help restore the gospel to the earth. He followed Their directions.

Joseph Smith organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and became the first prophet and President of the Church. He translated the Book of Mormon, built the first latter-day temple, and received most of the revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants. We are grateful to him for helping to restore the gospel to the earth. And we should be thankful for the example of faith and courage he set for all of us. What a blessing it is that Joseph Smith prayed to Heavenly Father when he needed an answer. We, too, can go to Heavenly Father in prayer and receive answers to important questions in our lives. Through prayer we can also receive a testimony from Heavenly Father that Joseph Smith was a prophet.



JOSEPH IN THE SACRED GROVE

Remove pages 14 and 15 from the magazine and glue them onto a sheet of heavy paper or lightweight cardboard. Carefully cut out each piece, then glue a small craft stick onto the back of each, with the stick extending out the side (see illustration). Find a box about the size of a medium-size shoe box. Cut large openings on both ends and on the box lid (see illustration). As you tell the story of the First Vision, use the box as a stage. Move the different figures and scenery on and off the stage through the side holes as you tell the story. You may want to tell the story at a family home evening.



SHARING TIME IDEAS

(Note: CS = *Children's Songbook*; GAK = *Gospel Art Kit*)

1. Draw a time line of the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Make the line long enough to hang pictures illustrating the event over the dates. The following examples have pictures from the GAK listed after each date. You may also use pictures from your library or draw your own. Events you might include on the time line: his birth/1805 (400), reading James 1:5/1820 (402), the First Vision/1820 (403), Moroni's first appearance/1823 (404), Joseph receiving the gold plates/1827 (406), translation of the Book of Mormon/1827–1829 (416), restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood/1829 (407), restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood/1829 (408), building the Kirtland Temple/1833–1836 (500), Elijah restored sealing power/1836 (417), Joseph Smith's martyrdom/1844 (401).

Hang the time line on a wall in the Primary room. Put the first and last pictures up and tell a little bit about the birth and death of the Prophet (see JS—H 1:3–4 and D&C 135:1). Conceal the rest of the pictures in a box or bag. Have a child from each class take a picture, tell about the event, and place it above the correct date on the time line. For some of the events you may wish to have another child from the same class lead the Primary in a song related to the picture. (For song suggestions, see Idea 2). Display the time line each week during the month, and refer to it as you discuss different events in the life of Joseph Smith and the restoration of the gospel.

2. To help the children understand and appreciate the role of Joseph Smith in the restoration of the gospel, make a copy of a picture of an event in Joseph Smith's life. Trace an outline of the picture onto a piece of heavy paper or lightweight cardboard, then cut the picture into jigsaw puzzle pieces. Trace the outline of each piece in its correct position on the outline of the puzzle. Write one question about the restoration of the gospel on the back of each puzzle piece. For example: When was the Church organized? (April 6, 1830); Who was the first President of the Church? (Joseph Smith); What is a prophet? (One called to speak for Heavenly Father); Who appeared to Joseph Smith when he prayed in the Sacred Grove? (Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ); What was Joseph Smith told during the First Vision? (To join none of the churches); What was the name of the angel who appeared to Joseph Smith about three years after the First Vision? (Moroni); Who was Moroni? (The last prophet in the Book of Mormon); Why did Moroni visit Joseph Smith? (To teach him and prepare him to receive the gold plates); Who appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to restore the Aaronic Priesthood? (John the Baptist); etc.

Have the children take turns choosing a puzzle piece, reading the question on the back, answering the question (with help from other children, if necessary), and placing the piece in its correct position on the poster. You may wish to include songs about the life of the Prophet, instead of a question, on some of the puzzle pieces. Examples from the CS: "On a Golden Springtime" (p. 88), "The Golden Plates" (p. 86), "The Priesthood Is Restored" (p. 89), and "This Is My Beloved Son" (p. 76). Remind the children of how much the Prophet Joseph Smith did for us in helping to restore the gospel and how grateful we should be to him. Bear your testimony of the restoration of the gospel.

3. Invite two local missionaries to share with the children the story of the Prophet Joseph Smith as they present it in the discussions, and their testimonies. Have them also share experiences of how accepting the gospel has changed people's lives. Use songs from the CS and pictures from GAK to reinforce what the missionaries present to the children.

4. Display a bouquet of four artificial flowers and one real flower. Ask how the flowers are different from one another. Point out that the main difference is that only one is a true flower. Explain that though there are many churches in the world today, only one of them is the true church of Jesus Christ. Look up D&C 1:30 and read it together. Help the children discover the significance of the Church's name by writing each word of its name on a strip of paper and putting the strips into a box. Have several children draw the strips out of the box and hang them in order on the wall.

Ask questions about the name of the Church and when it was organized. Give classes or individuals a scripture to look up to find the answer. Examples: Why is the Church named after the Savior? (3 Ne. 27:8; D&C 115:4 / He is the head of the Church); Why is the date the Church was organized, April 6, important? (D&C 20:1 / It is the date of the Savior's birth); Why is "of Latter-day" in the name? (D&C 20:1; 115:4 / Because we are living in the last days; the name was revealed to Joseph Smith); What were members of the Church called in New Testament times? (Romans 1:7 / Saints). List the reasons the children give under the related word on the pieces of paper. Be sure that the children understand that the Church was taken from the earth when the Apostles died and the members strayed from the truth. The Lord chose Joseph Smith to help restore (bring back) the true church. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and He chooses the prophets of His Church today just as He chose Joseph Smith to be the first prophet and President of the Church in the latter days. Sing "The Church of Jesus Christ," (CS, p. 77).

5. Working with the music leader, prepare a "Sing-a-Story" (See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, pp. 174–175) of the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Tell (or select children to be prepared to tell) stories and/or show pictures that illustrate the following qualities or achievements in Joseph Smith's life. Then sing related songs from the CS: Joseph Smith was obedient to his parents ("Quickly I'll Obey," p. 197); he studied the scriptures, ("Seek the Lord Early," p. 108); he worked hard with his family ("When We're Helping," p. 198); he liked to play and have fun ("Do As I'm Doing," p. 276); he prayed to Heavenly Father ("The Sacred Grove," p. 87); he received the gold plates from the Angel Moroni ("The Golden Plates," p. 86); he loved his family ("The Family," p. 194); and he organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("The Church of Jesus Christ," p. 77). Bear your testimony to the children of how our lives have been blessed because of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

6. *Song Presentation*: "The Sacred Grove" (CS, p. 87). This song can be taught by using pictures from the GAK or the ward library, or by making simple drawings, mounting them on heavy paper, and attaching them to craft sticks that the children can hold up. Divide the song into phrases, and practice while holding up an appropriate picture: "The Sacred Grove was green and fresh," / picture of the Sacred Grove; "The morning sun shone bright around," / picture of the sun; "As Joseph knelt in fervent prayer," (sing twice) / picture of Joseph praying in the Sacred Grove; "Upon that sacred ground," / picture of the ground or of the Sacred Grove and point to the ground; "The Father and the Son appeared," / picture of the First Vision; "They spoke to him as with one voice," / picture of Joseph Smith; "Their message answered all his fears," (sing twice) / word FEARS; "And made his heart rejoice," / picture of a heart.

Select four children to help with the first verse, and four different children to help with the second verse. Ask questions such as "What happened in the Sacred Grove?", "Why do we think of the ground as sacred?" Help the children understand the significance of what occurred when the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith. Bear your testimony of the restoration of the gospel and the Prophet Joseph Smith.

7. Additional *Friend* resources: "Joseph Smith's First Vision," Apr. 1995, pp. 34–35; "Respect for Others" (Joseph Smith respected those of other faiths), Oct. 1995, IFC; "Picture Puzzle" (draw a picture of Joseph Smith), Dec. 1996, p. 23; "Joseph Smith Asked Heavenly Father to Help Him Choose the Right," Jan. 1997, pp. 12–13, 46; "The First Vision," Jan. 1997, pp. 48–IBC; "Obtaining the Plates," Feb. 1997, pp. 48–IBC; "The One Hundred and Sixteen Lost Pages," Mar. 1997; pp. 48–IBC; "Translation of the Book of Mormon," Apr. 1997, pp. 48–IBC; "Joseph Smith—Valiant Servant of God," Oct. 1997, pp. 14–15, 46; "Apples for Sale" (story of how a boy and his father saved the Prophet's life), Oct. 1997, pp. 27–29; "The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith," Dec. 1997, pp. 48–IBC.