

THE Articles of Faith AND THE LIFE OF Joseph Smith

The Articles of Faith can help us—and especially our children and grandchildren—see the Prophet Joseph Smith’s life in a meaningful framework.



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IN PONDERING HOW I might make the history of Joseph Smith come to life for my grandchildren, the thirteen Articles of Faith came to mind as a helpful connector. It soon became exciting to see how well the Articles of Faith brought to light the main stages in Joseph Smith’s prophetic mission and inspired life.

Especially for children, who know these crystal clear declarations of belief, the Articles of Faith provide a familiar framework within which to understand Joseph Smith’s labors between 1820 and 1842, the year he wrote the Articles of Faith in his famous Wentworth Letter.¹

In that letter, the Prophet looked back over his remarkable life and summarized the rise and progress of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the Articles of Faith, which close the letter, he summarized some key doctrines of the restored gospel—doctrines that we can associate with certain events in his history. Consider some ways in which the Articles of Faith and the life of Joseph Smith are aligned.

1. *We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.*

1820

Joseph’s mission as a prophet began in the spring of 1820 in a grove near his family’s log home, south of Palmyra, New York, USA. There, filled with the Holy Ghost, he plainly learned that the Father and the Son are separate beings. It is no surprise that the Articles of Faith also begin where Joseph began.



With the First Vision, Joseph Smith learned the true nature of the Godhead.

2. *We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.*

3. *We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.*

1829

In the next several years, Joseph dealt with some ordinary follies of youth; he also learned some extraordinary lessons about accountability, especially when Martin Harris lost the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript and, as a result, the power to translate was taken from Joseph for a season. Through these experiences, he learned firsthand the foundational principles of agency, choice, and accountability.



In translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith learned more about Christ’s Atonement.



Martin Harris mortgaged his farm (right) to print the Book of Mormon. During this time he also learned a lot about repentance.

