



## **Lesson Five: The Search**

### **Inquiry Questions:**

- How can you prepare for your future, when you don't know what is coming next?

### **Historical Context: Information about various church leaders**

William W. Blair first became acquainted with the saints in 1851 when several ministers connected with the Latter Day Saints began preaching in his area. He soon became convinced of the truth of their message and was baptized by William Smith on October 8, 1851. He associated with William Smith and his companions until 1852 when he determined that some of them were dwelling in unrighteousness. In 1855, he met and associated himself with Elder John E. Page and others. In November 1856, Blair was visited by two missionaries of the Reorganization. Shortly thereafter, Blair and his wife traveled to the Zarahemla, Wisconsin branch to make the acquaintance of Elder Zenos H. Gurley. One year later, Blair attended the church's Annual Conference in Zarahemla and was baptized on April 7<sup>th</sup> by Zenos H. Gurley and ordained a High Priest the following day. Two years later, W.W. Blair was ordained an apostle on October 7, 1858 at a Semiannual Conference in Zarahemla. Following his ordination, Blair became an active missionary visiting most of the United States and Canada. In 1873, he was called to be First Counselor to the President of the church. He died suddenly on April 18, 1896 while en route from a General Conference in Kirtland, Ohio to his home in Lamoni, Iowa.

Israel L. Rogers was born in 1818 and grew up in the state of New York under Baptist influence. In 1840, while working on the Black River Canal he overheard some workfellows discussing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. After listening to a few sermons, Rogers became convinced of the truth of the movement and was immediately baptized. After Joseph Smith Jr.'s death, Rogers remained at his home in Sandwich, Illinois. Although he entertained many representatives of the different factions at his house, he joined none of the movements. About 1850, Rogers received word that William Smith had claimed to be trustee for the church until Joseph III could take his father's place as church president. Rogers soon joined William's cause and was ordained as his counselor, but quickly left the movement after discovering William had introduced polygamy. Rogers did not join another movement until 1859; in March of the next year he accompanied William Marks and W.W. Blair to visit Joseph Smith III in Nauvoo and invite him to lead the church. Rogers was chosen and ordained as the first Bishop of the Reorganization at the April 1860 conference in Amboy, Illinois. After serving the church for twenty-two years, Israel Rogers resigned from office at the Annual Conference in Independence, Missouri, in April of 1882.

William Marks joined the church in April 1835. In 1837, he joined the High Council, a church governing body. Two years later, Marks was appointed Stake President of Nauvoo, having administrative control over the church in the city of Nauvoo. When Joseph Smith tried to remove Sidney Rigdon from the First Presidency, Marks came to his support and watched as the Conference voted to keep Rigdon in the Presidency. Both Rigdon and Marks were strong opponents to plural marriage, an issue that caused serious problems after the prophet's death. Many believed Marks should have been the leaders of the Latter Day Saint church, but he never



advanced a claim. Following the church's attempt to excommunicate him, William Marks left Nauvoo no longer feeling welcome in 1845. He aided in Joseph III's ordination in 1860 as president of the Reorganization, and later became his counselor in the First Presidency. Marks died in Plano, Illinois, in 1872.

**Pre-Class Reading:**

*Joseph Smith III: A Pragmatic Prophet* by Roger Launius, Chapter Five: The Search

**Discussion Questions:**

Launius quoted Joseph III (on page 98) as noting that by living "uprightly and honestly" all are Christian regardless of what church, if any, they chose to join.

- Can Christianity be defined?
- What are some examples from the book that might help explain why Joseph believed that the individual's behavior and attitude was far more important than a denominational affiliation?

Joseph reports a spiritual experience connected to his future course.

- What confirmation did Joseph assert led him to the conclusion that he should not to go to Utah?

Samuel Gurley and Edmund Briggs were sent to Nauvoo to bring Joseph into the Reorganization, believing he was the rightful successor. Joseph initially refused to affiliate with their movement.

- What do you think they expected to achieve out of their meeting?
- What reasons does Joseph give/present for his refusal?
- How do Gurley and Briggs react to Joseph's rejection?

At the close of their Nauvoo visit, Marks and company sail from Nauvoo with Joseph watching and waving. The end of the chapter (page 112) lists some of the thoughts that likely weighed on Joseph's mind.

- What must have been running through Joseph's mind at this time?
- How would you have responded in Joseph's shoes?

**Class Activity:**

Create a timeline of the different significant events that happened to Joseph III during this chapter



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**Reading Assignment:**

*Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet*, Chapter Six: Getting Started

*Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* by Roger Launius and a variety of historical reprints are available at [www.redbrickstore.com](http://www.redbrickstore.com). All Red Brick Store purchases help preserve Community of Christ historic sites.

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