



Lesson Three: Maturity, 1846-56

Inquiry Questions:

- Has any person, experience or event drastically affected the way you view things?
- How did it change you?

Historical Context: Phrenology and two other movements of the 1850's:

Phrenology is the theory that someone can study the shape and bumps of a person's skull in order to determine their character and intelligence. Today phrenology has been disproven and is no longer considered a science, but it was wildly popular during Joseph III's lifetime. Interestingly, Joseph Smith Jr.'s skull was examined by phrenologists more than once. One of his phrenology readings was published in the 2 July 1842 edition of *The Wasp*, a newspaper that was published in Nauvoo.

Astrology is the study of the movements and positions of stars and planets in order to determine their effects on the earth and human affairs. It is an ancient practice that dates back thousands of years. In the 1850's one of the largest aspects of astrology was predicting the weather. Almanacs, containing weather forecasts and seasonal information for farmers, were widely in use during this period.

Spiritualism in Joseph III's lifetime was the belief that after death a person's spirit could come back and communicate with the living. The spirits were thought to communicate best through a medium, the name for a person who was particularly connected to the spiritual world. Medium's often captivated their audiences with spectacular demonstrations and phenomena that they claimed were caused by spirits.

Pre-Class Reading:

Joseph Smith III: A Pragmatic Prophet by Roger Launius, Chapter Three: Maturity, 1846-56

Discussion Questions:

As he grew into maturity, Joseph III had serious questions about his life's direction. He explored careers in storekeeping, tourism and law, but was not successful at everything.

- What were some of the struggles Joseph III faced as he tried to discover his place in the world?
- What can others learn from his journey to uncover more about himself?

Pages 66 and 67 quote a vision, experienced by Joseph III, regarding a bustling city and an open area. Reread that excerpt.

- What stood out for you in this experience of Joseph Smith III?
- How have you interpreted his vision?
- How do you think Joseph Smith III understood the vision?



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Launius argues that before getting involved and taking a stance on an issue, Joseph III carefully sized up the situation.

- Do you agree with this approach to handling situations?
- Is this approach adaptable for issues in your community?
- What about your congregation? Is it applicable for the World Church?

Class Activity:

Individually, or as a group, list the various Latter Day Saints that visited Joseph III during this period of his life. Describe their reasons for visiting Joseph Smith III and his reactions to each of the visitors.

Reading Assignment:

Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet, Chapter Four: Origins of the Reorganization

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

Additional information and opportunities to help preserve and share Community of Christ history may be found on the Historic Sites Foundation's website: www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org