



Lesson One: A Mormon Heritage

Inquiry Questions:

- What do you think the word Pragmatic means?
- What other qualities would you expect a prophetic leader to have?

Historical Context: A Restoration Church

From the 1800's to the 1830's, church revivals spread across the country as Americans felt the need to organize into faith communities. These communities drew on the traditions of the Protestant Reformation, rejecting the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Reformers believed that Medieval Christianity had suffered an apostasy, and hoped to **restore** the Christian church to its earliest form, relying on the scriptures to guide them. Different reformers, however, could legitimately argue contradictory interpretations. As a result several different churches began during this time, including: Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Universalists, Quakers, Unitarians, "Campbellites" (followers of Alexander Campbell which later developed into the Disciples of Christ) and many others.

The Church of Christ (Community of Christ church's original name) like several other groups, felt called to restore Christianity to its primitive or pure condition. When they organized the church in 1830, they felt that they were restoring the church that Christ had founded over a thousand years earlier. While the early church drew on the Bible as a source, particularly the book of Acts, chapter two, they also relied on revelation from God to direct them. From the scriptures the members saw a glimpse of the way things were: early Christians were known as "Saints," the congregations were served by elders, deacons and bishops, members were baptized and shared in the sacrament of Communion or the Lord's Supper, and members experienced angelic visitations and outpourings of the Holy Spirit. The early members of the Church of Christ also experienced outpourings of the Holy Spirit, including healings, angelic visitations, and visions. Unlike many of their contemporaries, the Church of Christ believed that God was present in their everyday lives, and through his revelations a new witness to Christ's teachings on earth emerged, known as the Book of Mormon.

Pre-Class Reading: *Joseph Smith III: A Pragmatic Prophet* by Roger Launius, Chapter One: A Mormon Heritage

Discussion Questions:

In this chapter, Roger Launius described Joseph III's schooling in colorful detail. In Joseph Smith III's memoirs, Smith reflects on his early school days, "My memory was ever excellent so far as the studies of geography, history and spelling were concerned, but not so serviceable in the study of arithmetic. The intricacies of figures bewildered me."

- What subjects were you the strongest at in school?
- What subjects "bewildered" you?

Joseph III deeply respected his father but never had the chance to know him as an adult.

- Is there an adult you admired as a child that you don't get to spend time with now?



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- What would you ask them if you had the chance to speak with them today?

On page six, Launius describes Joseph Jr. as a “dreamer and a visionary,” however Joseph III is described as pragmatic and “more concerned with the practical workings of an organization.”

- How do you think Joseph Jr.’s leadership style affected Joseph III as an adult?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of being a visionary leader?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses a pragmatic leader?

Class Activity:

Using the map provided, plot the cities Joseph III lived in as a child. Label the years that he lived in each place.

Reading Assignment: *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet*, Chapter Two: The Formative Years 1844-46

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