



Lesson Six: Getting Started

Inquiry Questions:

- Have you ever wanted to start something new, but found it was difficult to get started? What made it so difficult to begin?
- How did you get through the difficulties?

Historical Context: Joseph III's initial sermon at the 1860 conference taken from his memoirs: "I would say to you, brethren—as I hope you may be and in faith I trust you are, as a people that God has promised his blessings upon—I came not here of myself, but by the influence of the Spirit.

For some time past I have received manifestations pointing to the position which I am about to assume. I wish to say that I have come here not to be dictated by any man or set of men. I have come in obedience to a power not my own, and shall be dictated by the power that sent me. God works by means best known to himself, and I feel that for some time past he had been pointing out a work for me to do. For two or three years past, deputations have been waiting on me, urging me to assume the responsibilities of the leadership of the church; but I have answered each and every one of them that I did not wish to trifle with the faith of the people. I do not propose to assume this position in order to amass wealth out of it, neither have I sought it as a profit.

I know opinions are various in relation to these matters. I have conversed with those who told me they would not hesitate one moment in assuming the high and powerful position as the leader of this people. But I have been well aware of the motives which might be ascribed to me—motives of various kinds, at the foundation of all which is selfishness—should I come forth to stand in the place where my father stood.

I have believed that should I come without the guarantee of the people, I should be received in blindness, and would be liable to be accused of false motives. Neither would I come to you without receiving favor from my heavenly Father.

I have endeavored as far as possible to keep myself unbiased. I never conversed with J. J. Strang, for in those days I was but a boy, and in fact am now but a boy. I had not then acquired a sufficient knowledge of men to be capable of leading myself, setting aside the leading of others. There is but one principle taught by the leaders of any faction of this people that I hold in utter abhorrence; that is a principle taught by Brigham Young and those believing in him. I have been told that my father taught such doctrines. I have never believed it and never can believe it. If such things were done, then I believe they never were done by divine authority. I believe my father was a good man, and a good man never could have promulgated such doctrines. I believe in the doctrines of honesty and truth. The Bible contains such doctrines, and so do the *Book of Mormon*, and the *Book of Covenants*, which are auxiliaries to the Bible.



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I have my peculiar notions in regard to revelations, but am happy to say that they accord with those I am to associate with, at least those of them with whom I have conversed. I am not very conversant with those books (pointing to a volume before me), not so conversant as I should be, and will be. The time has been when the thought that I should assume the leadership of this people was so repulsive to me that it seemed as if the thing could never be possible.

The change in my feelings came slowly, and I did not suffer myself to be influenced by extraneous circumstances. I have never read the numerous works sent me which had a bearing on this subject, for fear they might entice me into wrongdoing. It is my determination to do right and let heaven take care of the result. Thus I come to you free from any taint of sectarianism, or taints from thoughts of the varied minds I have come in contact with; and thus hope to be able to build up my own reputation as a man.

It has been said that a Mormon elder, though but a stripling, possesses a power unequalled by almost any other preacher. This arises from a depth of feeling, and the earnestness with which they believe the doctrines they teach; and it is this feeling that I do not wish to trifle with. I know that Brigham Young is considered a man of talent, by some a bold and fortunate man, and by others an unscrupulous and bad man, according as circumstances differ. Should you take me as a leader, I propose that all should be dealt by in mercy, open as to Gentile or Jew.

I ask not to be received except as by the ordinances of the church. Some who ought to know the proprieties of the church have told me that no certain form was necessary in order for me to assume the leadership, that the position came by right of lineage; yet I know that if I attempted to lead as a prophet by these considerations and not by a call from Heaven, men would not be led to believe who do not believe now. And so I have come not of my own dictation to this sacred office.

I believe that we owe duties to our country and to society, and are amenable to the laws of the land. I have always considered it my duty to act upon this principle; and I do say that among the people where I live I have as many good and true friends as I could desire among those of any society. The people of Hancock County have been strongly anti-Mormon, and there I know of no enemies. I have been engaged in business with anti-Mormons; I have mingled with them, and have not only been obliged not to make any remarks which might give offense, but also to smother my feelings, if I had any. I hold no enmity to any man living who has fought this doctrine; nor do I know any who hold enmity towards me. I hope there are none.

In conclusion: I will come to you if you will receive me! will give my ability, and the influence my name may bring, together with what little power I possess; and I trust by your prayers and faith to be sustained. I pledge myself to promulgate no doctrine that shall not be approved by you or the code of good morals.

I have my shortcomings, but I trust as a leader I shall do nothing to lead astray. If I do so, I shall expect condemnation; for I am satisfied that this people, governed by the same policy would serve me worse than they have Brigham Young before, for I would be wholly deserted. A gentleman from Utah informs me that a majority of Brigham Young's people are restive, not



satisfied with their condition, but dare say nothing. He says that those who preach and those who practice his teachings are in reality the old fogies of the institution, and that the younger ones take a different view of matters.

I do not care to say any more at present, but will simply add that if the same Spirit which prompts my coming, prompts also my reception, I am with you.” (74 bc, 75d)

Pre-Class Reading:

Joseph Smith III: A Pragmatic Prophet by Roger Launius, Chapter Six: Getting Started

Discussion Questions:

When Joseph arrived in Amboy for the conference, the congregation “sobbed aloud in their joy and gratefulness.” For many this was the fulfillment of years of hoping, praying and waiting.

- Why did this moment mean so much to them?
- What impact do you think the congregation’s reaction had on Joseph III?

In his opening address, Joseph Smith III announced that he was likely to make mistakes as leader of the church.

- What does this statement tell us about Joseph Smith III character?

Pages 125 and 126 give examples of the disappointment of some who had met Joseph for the first time.

- What reasons were presented for their being disappointed in him? Would you consider these legitimate complaints?
- How does Joseph approach the complaints/disappointments of his fellow church members?
- Do you think Joseph ever disappointed himself?

The second half of page 119 compares Mormonism to a machine. Reread the possible solutions Joseph III suggests can be used effectively to fix “the machine” when it breaks.

- Does this analogy work for you? Explain.

Class Activity:

Make a list of Joseph’s family in 1860, including: wife, brothers, mother, and stepfather. Include their ages if possible. Write down the individual family member’s response to Joseph joining the Reorganization. Consider the following questions with each individual Smith family member:

- How did the individual family member view Joseph’s action in accepting the role of President in the Reorganization?
- Did the individual follow Joseph into the Reorganization? Why or why not?



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Reading Assignment:

Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet, Chapter Seven: Forging an Organization

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.

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