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L.D.S. Church History, Lesson 3: The Ancient Plates

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*Questions and Problems for
Discussion*

1. In your opinion which mate is more responsible for creating the atmosphere of the home? Give reasons and examples of cases that justify your answer.

2. Which mate should assume the initiative in promoting active participation of the family group in each of the following fields of activity: Religion, social contacts, education, recreation, economics.

3. Mrs. Rice complains and nags at Mr. Rice because she says he has changed from being the most courteous and gallant fiance to the most

discourteous and ungallant husband. What would you do if Mr. Rice were your husband? Suppose that it was Mrs. Rice who had changed in a similar manner, what would you do?

4. Mr. Lee owned and operated a grocery store in a small rural community. At the time of his death Mrs. Lee had no knowledge of her husband's business or of his financial condition. There were three children ranging in ages from nine years to sixteen years. At the time of marriage, Mrs. Lee had had one year of college training. In what way, if any, does this case represent failure on the part of each mate?



Mission Lessons

L. D. S. CHURCH HISTORY

Lesson 3

The Ancient Plates

(To be used in place of Literary Lesson)

JUST what did that golden book look like which Joseph Smith took out of that stone box in the Hill Cumorah on the morning of September 22, 1827?

To answer this question, let us use our imagination a little.

Suppose, for one thing, that you take a piece of common tin, cut it into a sheet seven by eight inches, and color it so as to make it look like gold. Suppose, further, that you take enough sheets like that to make a book about six inches in thickness, put on them, if you can, lines of beautiful engravings, and then bind them all together by three rings at the side. Suppose, now, that you

somehow seal a part of this book, so that the leaves cannot be turned by anyone.

Having done all this, you will have as good a likeness as is possible of the book that had lain hidden in Cumorah for fourteen hundred years.

One other thing, however, must be taken into consideration: If you wanted to read that book, and could do so, it would be necessary for you to turn to what we now call the last page and read gradually toward what we know as the beginning. That is not all. On the page you would have to read from right to left, not from left to right as we do

nowadays in English. That is because it would be a sort of Hebrew, or "reformed Egyptian", that you would be reading.

Now do you have a picture of the Nephite Record as it was when the Prophet received it from Moroni?

We may be sure that, when Joseph received the golden book from its heavenly keeper, his heart beat faster than it had ever done before.

It was a priceless treasure. What would not the world have given for it! It was of gold, for one thing, and, for another, it was a message from an unknown people. What a trust to be given! It must have frightened the young man when he thought about the matter. He must not fail, come what might! Besides, had not the angel told him that, if he would do all in his power to carry on, God would do the rest?

The work expected of Joseph had not been kept a secret. Who could keep such a secret under the circumstances? It was known, therefore, that he was to receive the plates from an angel, that they were of gold, and that they contained the history of the ancient Americans. All this was talked about in Manchester and Palmyra and other places near by in Wayne county.

So some curious, designing neighbors lay in wait. Or were they only curious neighbors, after all? It mattered not. They made it necessary for Joseph to be ever on guard.

"No sooner," says the Prophet, "was it known that I had the plates than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me." On the way home he was attacked by some men. He got away, however, with no more hurt than a dislocated

thumb. The plates were safe. After that, other attempts were made to find them in the house and in an old cooper shop across the road.

Joseph decided that he must leave Manchester so as to obtain the necessary peace and quiet to translate the record. So he went to another State—Pennsylvania. On leaving Manchester he hid the golden book in a keg of beans. At length he arrived at Harmony, about one hundred and twenty-five miles away.

Meantime, he had married. His wife was Emma Hale, the daughter of Isaac Hale, and her home, before her marriage, was in Harmony, now Oakland. This is why the Prophet went to that place. He had met her, two years before, when he went there to work and boarded at the home of her father. They were married January 18, 1827. It was now December. Meantime, too, Joseph had worked to help the family and to keep himself, for the Smiths were poor. There was a mortgage on the farm, and Alvin, the eldest son, on whom the family depended, had died when he was most needed.

Sometimes Joseph worked on the farm, clearing the land of trees and brush, planting and reaping, and doing other things. Sometimes he did odd jobs for other farmers in the neighborhood—hauling firewood to Palmyra and digging wells. He was laboring for a man named Josiah Stool at the time he first met Emma, in Harmony.

But what with work, anxiety over the safety of the golden book, and the need of someone to write for him, he had been unable to do any translating, to speak of. Indeed, up to the end of the year, he had only

copied some of the characters on the record and turned them into English.

In Harmony he waited. First he had to get settled. He bought some land from his father-in-law and a yoke of oxen from his friend Stool—all on time. And then he waited for someone who could act as his secretary.

In April, 1829, after he had been in possession of the plates for eighteen months, Oliver Cowdery came along. Oliver had taught school in Manchester. Having some of the Smith children in his school, he thus became acquainted with the parents and learned from them the story of the golden book. It was such a strange story that he prayed to know whether or not it was true. His prayer was answered to his satisfaction. So, in the spring when his school was out, he went to Harmony to act as scribe for the Prophet.

In April, 1829, then, the translation of the *Book of Mormon* as we now have it was begun. Part of the translation was done in Harmony, but part of it was done in Fayette, New York State. For Joseph and Oliver had found it necessary to move from the first place to the second.

As in Manchester, so in Harmony, people were curious and suspicious, to say the least. What were these young men doing behind closed doors? That is what their neighbors wanted to know. And they were so determined to find out that they made life uncomfortable for Joseph and his friend. Even Mr. Hale, Joseph's father-in-law, was at last won over to the side of those meddling neighbors. He had defended the

young men at first. When matters became too disagreeable for them, they left Harmony.

Fayette was the home of the Whitmer family. David, one of the sons, knew Oliver Cowdery very well. The two had met in Palmyra, a town not far away. When, therefore, Oliver decided to go to Harmony, it was agreed that the two should write to each other, and that is what they did. David became convinced that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet. And so it was only natural that, when a change of residence became necessary, Joseph and Oliver should be invited to the Whitmer home. While the translation was going on in Harmony, a Mr. Joseph Knight, who lived in Colesville, New York State, often took provisions to the sacred workers.

Thus God moved in a mysterious way his wonders to perform!

The work was finished during the early summer of 1829. As soon as the gold plates were translated, the Prophet began to look about for a publisher. After some difficulty it was decided to have the work done in Palmyra, on the Grandin press. But first a copy of the writing was made by Oliver Cowdery. It was this copy that the printer had. For Joseph had learned to be careful. The book appeared in March, 1830. It bore the title *The Book of Mormon*, by which name it has always been known. The printing of the new book was paid for by Martin Harris, who sold his farm to do so. He was paid back from the proceeds brought by the sale of the book. The price for each copy was \$2.50.

Questions

1. Describe, as nearly as you can, the appearance of the gold plates.

2. What was Joseph Smith to do with the ancient Record? What did Moroni tell him about the care of it? What steps did he take to preserve the book from the hands of others? Why did he leave Manchester? Where did he go? Why there?

3. Who was Oliver Cowdery? How did he become interested in Joseph's work? When was the translation begun? Where was it finished? How did Joseph and Oliver

come to move to Fayette? Tell about David Whitmer. Who was Joseph Knight?

4. Where was the book published? Why was a copy of the manuscript made and by whom? When was the new book published? How was the printing paid for?

5. Trace the hand of God in this work from the time Joseph received the plates till the appearance of the book.

Note: Map printed in July magazine is to be used in teaching Church History lessons.



SHADES

By Courtney Elizabeth Cottam

My neighbor Brown is stern and proud,
And always airs her views aloud;
She loathes the weak and erring way,
"Right's easier than wrong," she'll say.

My neighbor Green is calm and mild,
Her manners charming as a child;
She props the weak and erring soul;
"Not all are strong," she will extol.

My neighbor Brown is sure she's right,
For black is black and white is white!
My neighbor Green will smile and say,
"Black mixed with white will make pearl-grey."