

251.1: The Church in Nauvoo (D&C Gospel Doctrine Lesson 29, Updated)

[Building the Kingdom of God in Nauvoo, Illinois](#)

Outline

- I. Listener feedback from last episode, intro
- II. Framing
- III. Discussion of new resources
- IV. Productive Sunday Schooling
  - a. We are used to “reading our scriptures” without digging into the historical context. Encourage class to embrace the learning opportunity these history-centered lessons represent, introduce them to the resources (our Heritage and the new Church resources, Revelations in Context)
  - b. Ask class what they know about the Nauvoo period
  - c. Invite comments and questions about the reading, especially Our Heritage and the new resources
  - d. What did the Saints do in Nauvoo and how can we learn from it?
    - i. Eager cooperation to build the temple
    - ii. Founding of the Relief Society
    - iii. Building the Kingdom of God on earth (Saints learning from their mistakes, seeking all possible legal protections and structure)
    - iv. Cautionary tale: Secrecy and polygamy, downfall in Nauvoo (Will deal with polygamy in Lesson 31)
    - v. Conclusion: The city beautiful (Saints worked hard, worked together, drained the swamp, sought revelation and spiritual blessings. Inspiring example of temporal, spiritual, and community well-being)

Church members lived in relative peace, secure in the fact that a prophet walked and labored among them. Hundreds of missionaries called by the Prophet left Nauvoo to proclaim the gospel. A temple was constructed, the temple endowment was received, wards were created for the first time, stakes were established, the Relief Society was organized, the book of Abraham was published, and significant revelations were received. For more than six years, the Saints displayed a remarkable degree of unity, faith, and happiness as their city became a beacon of industry and truth. (Our Heritage, Chapter 5: Sacrifices and Blessings in Nauvoo)

**Listener Feedback:** I really appreciated this comment from Logan: “The reality of mortality is that man is imperfect and there is a real possibility that we will fail each other when we need each other the most. However the consolation is that “because Jesus walked such a long, lonely path utterly alone, we do not have to do so.” It is that even “if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee” that God will help us use our pain for our

benefit as you eloquently talked about, because we can heal and find solace in the sacrifice and understanding of the only person who truly understands how we feel. Of course I don't mean to diminish our role as mourners and comforters to our fellow saints and brothers and sisters here on earth by saying we can and will fail each other at times, but I think the podcast lacked a discussion on the only sure and lasting source of peace, healing, and succor through our pain and suffering--Jesus.... I do still feel that in a discussion on the Sunday school lesson with a topic of "O God, Where Art Thou?", with strong overtones of pain and suffering in the context of the trial of Liberty Jail, there has to be a recognition in awe, gratitude, and almost disbelief that one minister truly understands perfectly, and provides the way, the power, and the infinite sacrifice needed to one day heal from our suffering and let our pain refine and remove our impurities. That not only is the space important where we come to know, be healed by, and recognize our God, but he himself is important, and the power whereby he gives us the opportunity to heal, reduce our suffering, or quicken our ability to be refined through our pain--amazing grace--has a divine source, Christ.

In chaplain class I was moved by this section of the book *Wounded Healer*:

“The minister who has come to terms with his own loneliness and is at home in his own house is a host who offers hospitality to his guests. He gives them a friendly space, where they may feel free to come and go, to be close and distant, to rest and to play, to talk and to be silent, to eat and to fast. The paradox indeed is that hospitality asks for the creation of an empty space where the guest can find his own soul. Why is this a healing ministry? It is healing because it takes away the false illusion that wholeness can be given by one to another. It is healing because it does not take away the loneliness and the pain of another, but invites him to recognize his loneliness on a level where it can be shared. Many people in this life suffer because they are anxiously searching for the man or woman, the event or encounter, which will take their loneliness away. But when they enter a house with real hospitality they soon see that their own wounds must be understood not as sources of despair and bitterness, but as signs that they have to travel on in obedience to the calling sounds of their own wounds. From this we get an idea of the kind of help a minister may offer. A minister is not a doctor whose primary task is to take away pain. Rather, he deepens the pain to a level where it can be shared. When someone comes with his loneliness to the minister, he can only expect that his loneliness will be understood and felt, so that he no longer has to run away from it but can accept it as an expression of his basic human condition.”

In my emphasis on showing up for each other I neglected this important point, that there is a sacred space where we will always be alone, despite all efforts to connect with others. And it is in this sacred space where we come to know and nurture our relationships with God. I'm glad Logan caringly brought that essential point to my attention.

## **New Resources**

### **[Lesson 29: Building the Kingdom of God in Nauvoo, Illinois](#)**

- [“Organizing the Church in Nauvoo”](#): This article gives context for the revelations now found in Doctrine and Covenants 124 and 125.

While the vast majority of the existing accounts of Joseph Smith's public sermons date from the Illinois period of Church history, the opposite is true of records of his revelations. In the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, 135 sections were written during Joseph Smith's lifetime, and only nine of those date from the five years that the Prophet lived in Nauvoo. Of the 110 sections canonized during Joseph Smith's lifetime (those that were included in the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants), only three date from the Illinois period.

The next three sections of the current Doctrine and Covenants—sections 129, 130, and 131—contain excerpts from instructions Joseph Smith gave in 1843 in Nauvoo (section 129) and the small town of Ramus, Illinois (sections 130 and 131). Section 132 deals with plural and celestial marriage, and, while recorded in 1843, portions of it were known to Joseph Smith prior to his arrival in Nauvoo. Furthermore, its circulation was limited during the Prophet's life to only his closest and most loyal friends. Thus, though relatively few organizational or instructional revelations were recorded during the final years of Joseph Smith's life, the lengthy and complex revelation received on January 19, 1841, was an exception. For Church members at the time, it was, in many ways, *the* Nauvoo revelation.

- [Daughters in My Kingdom, chapter 2](#): This chapter explains how the Relief Society was founded in Nauvoo. Excellent resource. In that era, it was a popular practice for women to form their own organizations, often with constitutions and bylaws—sets of rules to govern the organizations. The women who met at Sarah Kimball's home decided to establish a constitution and bylaws, and Eliza R. Snow accepted the responsibility to write them. Then the women asked Joseph Smith to review them and give his opinion of them. After the Prophet read them, he said they were “the best he had ever seen. ‘But,’ he said, ‘this is not what you want. Tell the sisters their offering is accepted of the Lord, and he has something better for them than a written constitution. I invite them all to meet with me and a few of the brethren ... next Thursday afternoon, and I will organize the women under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood.’”
- [Nauvoo Relief Society minute book](#): The original records of the Nauvoo Relief Society are now available online. Looks like an amazing resource that few are likely to work through. 123 pages! The introduction is helpful if technical, and it would be great if someone mined it thoroughly for highlights. One point that caught my attention: Joseph Smith, who had joined the fraternal order and advanced to the degree of Master Mason the day before the organization of the Relief Society, occasionally made references to Masonry when he addressed Relief Society women in 1842.<sup>6</sup> More frequently, he referred to the Saints' rising temple and the priesthood order and blessings connected with it.
- [“Take Special Care of Your Family”](#): This article gives context for the revelation now known as Doctrine and Covenants 126. (Notes from Lesson 26) The tension between Church service and caring for our families is a BIG topic that brings up big feelings. There are a few trainings and handbook comments about not allowing callings to interfere with family, but as we all know callings and service too often does just that.

Full Episode:

- Why the Nauvoo period is so important historically
- Doctrinal development/revelation, distinctive Mormon teachings

- Establishment of the Relief Society
- Establishment of temple ordinances
- Nauvoo immigration stemming from earlier missionary efforts to England
- Polygamy and its role in the downfall of Nauvoo