

GENERAL YOUNG MEN OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOP
OCTOBER 2004

**2005 Mutual Theme Introduction:
A Great and Marvelous Work**

As presented in the Conference Center Theater September 28 – October 1, 2004.

Overview

This 10-minute presentation was written to introduce the 2005 mutual theme, “A Great and Marvelous Work,” to young men and their leaders. The script calls for three priesthood bearers: a 14-year-old teacher; a 17 year-old priest; and a 23-year-old elder. Each actor represents Joseph Smith at a different age. The same or different actors represent contemporary priesthood bearers of the same age. As with the portrayal of any prophet, only young men of wholesome personal character who are cleared by their priesthood leaders should be chosen to represent Joseph Smith.

In the original presentation, the set included three small platforms. Behind the platforms were three banners made with thin fabric, featuring sepia toned, historical photographs of the sacred grove, the interior of the Smith family cabin in Palmyra, and the Susquehanna River and surrounding woods. As the visitation of heavenly beings was described, these banners were illuminated with a bright white backlight. Behind the banners, colors indicating time of day were projected on a larger white screen. The image of the *Duty to God* medallion was reproduced on the front of the center platform, with the words “A Great and Marvelous Work,” and “Annual Mutual Theme 2005” on the left and right platforms respectively.

Sections of the vignettes were enhanced by sound effects and soft background music which played before and during actors’ lines. Sound

effects and musical underscore are indicated in the script. A young men's choir concluded the production. Underscoring and sound effects were prerecorded, but the choir performed live.

All of the words of Joseph Smith are taken from the *Doctrine & Covenants*, Joseph Smith—History, chapter 1. For ease of reading, excerpted sentences and sentence fragments are not set off by quotation marks or ellipses. However, brackets indicate word modifications and additions.

Adapting the Presentation

Stage directions herein reflect the original staging as these vignettes were presented in the Conference Center Theater. Production elements such as lighting, set, music, and costuming should be adapted to fit the setting and resources available. For instance, musical underscore may be performed live with available instruments, or it may be omitted altogether.

I

FADE UP front light on the first banner and platform. The 14-year-old Joseph Smith rises from a large family rocking chair. He sets the family Bible he has been reading on a nearby table and takes his hat in his hand. On the banner behind him is a photograph of the sacred grove. Colors on the large scrim behind the banner and songs of birds in the background indicate morning.

14-YEAR-OLD JOSEPH

I was in my fifteenth year [when we moved to Manchester, New York.]

In [our] second year there was an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.

My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult [of opinions] were so great and incessant.

In the midst of this war of words, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

While I was laboring under the difficulties cause by these parties, I was one day reading the epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him.

I reflected on [this passage] again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did. [So] at length I came to the conclusion that I must do as James directs.

MUSIC UP: *Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning* (instrumental underscore)

I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty.

[As] I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart unto God,

FADE UP light behind the banner, illuminating the photograph of the grove and brilliantly framing the 14-year old Joseph.

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”¹

FADE OUT front light on the first platform. As underscore concludes, the banner remains illuminated from behind, leaving the 14-year-old Joseph in silhouette. After the next vignette begins, the remaining light on the first vignette fades out.

II

FADE UP front light on the second banner and platform. On this platform, we see the end of a bed draped with a quilt. On the banner behind is a photograph of the interior of the Smith family cabin in Palmyra. Seventeen-year-old Joseph is dressing for the day—putting on his boots and buttoning his outer shirt. Night sky and stars on the large scrim behind the banner and the sound of crickets in the background indicate the approaching dawn.

17-YEAR-OLD JOSEPH

I continued to pursue my common vocations in life until the twenty-first of September, [eighteen] hundred and twenty-three, all the time suffering persecution because I continued to affirm that I had seen a vision. In consequence of these things, I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections.

[On] the evening of the twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God.

FADE UP light behind the banner, illuminating the photograph of the cabin and brilliantly framing the 17-year old Joseph.

MUSIC UP: *An Angel from on High* (instrumental underscore)

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when

immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do.

After telling me these things, he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. He quoted Malachi.² “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

[He] also quoted Joel.³ “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”⁴

FADE OUT front light on the second platform. As the underscore concludes, the banner remains illuminated from behind, leaving the 17-year-old Joseph in silhouette. After the next vignette begins, the remaining light on the second vignette fades out.

III

FADE UP front light on the third banner and platform. On the banner behind the third platform, we see a photograph of the Susquehanna River and surrounding woods. The 23-year old Joseph stands next to a planter box of tall grasses. We hear sounds of water gurgling in a stream and see daylight colors on the large scrim.

MUSIC UP: *The Spirit of God* (instrumental underscore)

23-YEAR-OLD JOSEPH

On the 5th day of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery came to my house. Two days [later] I commenced to translate the Book of Mormon, and he began to write for me.

We continued the work of translation, when, in the ensuing month [of] May, 1829, we went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins.

FADE UP light behind the banner, illuminating the photograph of river and woods and brilliantly framing the 23-year old Joseph.

While we were praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying: “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”

The messenger who conferred this Priesthood upon us said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. [He] acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us. [He said] that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second.

It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized.

[On] our coming up out of the water, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation.”⁵

FADE OUT front light on the third platform. As the underscore concludes, the banner remains illuminated from behind, leaving the 23-year-old Joseph in silhouette. After the next vignette begins, the remaining light on the third vignette fades out.

IV

FADE UP light on platform one. The 14-year-old Joseph has removed his outer shirt to reveal a modern white shirt and tie. Or a modern 14-year-old teacher in Sunday attire has replaced the 14-year-old Joseph.

MUSIC UP: *As Zion's Youth* (instrumental underscore) Accompaniment for each of the following three monologues should take about one song verse.

14-YEAR-OLD

My name is _____ and I am a Teacher in the _____ Ward. Joseph Smith was my age when he knelt in the grove of trees and received an answer to his prayer from Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. They trusted him. I try to remember that when I think about what it means for me to hold the priesthood at my age. To me, it means they trust me to serve others, be an example, and share my own testimony of the gospel. They trust me to keep the commandments and live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*—standards like treating young women with respect, and keeping my thoughts and actions clean. When I do these things, I have the power to exercise the priesthood. I know without any doubt that this is a great and marvelous work. I love it. And I know it's true.

FADE UP light on platform two. The 17-year-old Joseph has removed his outer coat to reveal a modern white shirt and tie. Or a modern 17-year-old priest in Sunday attire has replaced the 17-year-old Joseph.

17-YEAR-OLD

My name is _____. I'm a priest in the _____ Ward. In two years I'll be on a full-time mission. I still have weaknesses and imperfections. But I remember that Joseph was my age when he was visited by Moroni. He was just seventeen when he learned that God had a work for him to do. If he participated in this great and marvelous work at his age, I know I can, too. Young men *can* see visions, as the Prophet Joel said. And we can, even as young men, use the priesthood to assist God in accomplishing His purposes. The restored gospel is true. I know it's true. And I'll try, with everything I have, to do my part.

FADE UP light on platform three. The 23-year-old Joseph has also removed his outer shirt to reveal a modern white shirt and tie. Or a modern 23-year-old elder in Sunday attire has replaced the 23-year-old Joseph. This elder currently serves as a Young Men advisor.

23-YEAR-OLD

I'm _____, an elder from the _____ ward. Joseph Smith was my age when he and Oliver Cowdery prayed on the banks of the Susquehanna River and received the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist. He was my age when he received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John. I now have these two priesthoods myself.

I'm serving as an advisor to the young men in our ward. In our quorum, mutual, and Scouting activities, I can see the qualities of young Joseph Smith all around me—valiant hearts, yearning for the truth, desiring to do Heavenly Father's will.

When I think that Joseph Smith was their age when he was taught by ancient prophets, brought forth the *Book of Mormon*, and received the priesthood of God, I'm struck that this work is so much bigger than any one of us. One day soon, these youth will receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, serve missions, marry in the temple, and raise children of their own. What they do now, and what we do to help them, will affect generations to come.

This is a great and marvelous work, and it is carried on by Zion's youth in the latter-days. I pray I'll be worthy to lead them in this great cause.

FADE UP light on the choir, which is placed in two groups on either side of the platforms. Musical underscore indicates the choir's vocal entrance and they sing: (*As Zion's Youth*)

CHOIR OF YOUNG MEN

“As Zion's youth in latter days,
We stand with valiant heart,
With promise shining in our eyes,
Resolved to do our part.

As the music swells, the teacher and priest bring their scriptures and *Duty to God* booklets to the center platform. Their advisor opens the scriptures with them and they begin to study together. The light behind all three banners grows brighter and brighter. The choir continues singing:

Upon a noble past we build;
The future fills our view.
We face the challenge of our day
And pledge we will be true.”

FADE OUT front lights, after the music ends or while an instrumental tag is played. Back lights leave the three young men on the center platform in silhouette against the shining banners. Gradually fade to black.

¹ See JS-H 1: 3-17

² Malachi 4:5

³ See JS-H 1: 27-41

⁴ Joel 2: 28

⁵ See JS-H 1: 68-73