



Lesson 34: Faith in Every Footstep, D & C 136; *Our Heritage*, pages 71–77.

Introduction

Think of groups from the scriptures who were led on a journey to a promised land. Our mortal life is like a journey to the “promised land” of the celestial kingdom.

Speaking of the pioneers who laid the foundations of this dispensation, **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve said:

“Their journeys parallel our own. There are lessons for us in every footstep they took—lessons of love, courage, commitment, devotion, endurance, and, most of all, faith” (Ensign, May 1997, 59).

The Lord instructed the Saints regarding their physical preparations for their journey.

Winter Quarters

It took the Saints 131 days to travel the 310 miles from Nauvoo to the settlements in western Iowa where they would pass the winter of 1846–47 and prepare for their trek to the Rocky Mountains. This experience taught them many things about travel that would help them more quickly cross the 1,000 miles of the great American plains, which was done the following year in about 111 days.

A number of settlements of Saints stretched along both sides of the Missouri River. The largest settlement, Winter Quarters, was on the west side, in Nebraska. It quickly

became home to approximately 3,500 Church members, who lived in houses of logs and in dugouts of willows and dirt. As many as 2,500 Saints also lived in and around what was called Kanessville on the Iowa side of the Missouri River. Life in these settlements was almost as challenging as it had been on the trail. In the summer they suffered from malarial fever. When winter came and fresh food was no longer available, they suffered from cholera epidemics, scurvy, toothaches, night blindness, and severe diarrhea. Hundreds of people died. Yet life went on. The women spent their days cleaning, ironing, washing, quilting, writing

Next Week
#35 “A Mission of Saving” (D&C 4:4–7; 18:10–16; 52:40; 81:5–6; Moroni 7:45–48; *Our Heritage*, pp. 77–80)



This lesson discusses one of the greatest journeys in history—the trek of the pioneers to the Salt Lake Valley. During the lesson, compare the pioneers’ journey to your own journey toward eternal life.

Lesson Highlights

- The Lord instructed the Saints regarding their physical preparations for their journey.
- The Lord instructed the Saints regarding their conduct.
- Under the direction of President Brigham Young, the Saints journeyed to the Salt Lake Valley.

A study of this lesson will help us understand how the pioneers’ journey to the Salt Lake Valley parallels our journey back to our Heavenly Father and help us appreciate the sacrifices made by the pioneers.

letters, preparing their few provisions for meals, and caring for their families, according to Mary Richards, whose husband, Samuel, was on a mission in Scotland. She cheerfully recorded the comings and goings of the Saints at Winter Quarters, including such activities as theological discussions, dances, Church meetings, parties, and frontier revivals.

The men worked together and met often to discuss travel plans and the future site for the settlement of the Saints. They regularly cooperated in rounding up the herds that foraged on the prairie at the outskirts of the camp. They worked in the fields, guarded the perimeters of the settlement, constructed and operated a flour mill, and readied wagons for travel, often suffering from exhaustion and illness. Some of their work was an unselfish labor of love as they prepared fields and planted crops to be harvested by the Saints who would follow them.

Brigham Young's son John called Winter Quarters "the Valley Forge of Mormondom." He lived near the burial grounds there and witnessed the "small mournful-looking trains that so often passed our door." He recalled "how poor and same-like" his family's diet of corn bread, salt bacon, and a little milk seemed. He said mush and bacon became so nauseating that eating was like taking medicine and he had difficulty swallowing. Only the faith and dedication of the Saints carried them through this trying time.

The Saints in Winter Quarters suffered much from sickness and other hardships, yet they continued working and making preparations for their journey.

The Lord instructed the Saints regarding their conduct.

D&C 136:17–33. In addition to giving instructions on physical preparations, the Lord gave the Saints directions regarding spiritual matters and their conduct toward each other.

- **D&C 136:19.** "If any man shall seek to build up himself, and seeketh not my counsel, he shall have no power."
- **D&C 136:21.** "Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain." See also Exodus 20:7.)
- **D&C 136:23–24.** "Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one of another. ... Let your words tend to edifying one another."
- **D&C 136:25–26.** Return borrowed or lost items
- **D&C 136:27.** "Be diligent in preserving what thou hast."

The Lord gave the Saints instructions regarding preparations for their journey:

- **D&C 136:2.** Make a "covenant and promise to keep all the commandments and statutes of the Lord."
- **D&C 136:3.** Organize companies under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, with a president and two counselors and with captains of hundreds, fifties, and tens.
- **D&C 136:5.** "Let each company provide themselves with all ... they can."
- **D&C 136:6.** "Prepare for those who are to tarry [remain behind]." (Also see D&C 136:7, 9.)
- **D&C 136:8.** Care for "the poor, the widows, [and] the fatherless."
- **D&C 136:10.** "Let every man use all his influence and property to remove this people to ... a stake of Zion."



Winter Quarters – C.C.A. Christensen

In **D&C 136:28**, the Lord gives instruction on appropriate recreation. Speaking on this subject, **Elder David O. McKay** taught:

"On the plains, after a day's march, the wagons were drawn up in a circle, a man with the violin would take his place by the campfire and there on the prairie the sturdy Pioneers would join hands in a dance, opening it by prayer, and participate in amusement that fostered the spirit of the gospel. ... President Brigham Young ... once said, in substance: 'The atmosphere of the dance should be such that if any elder be called from the party to go to administer to a sick person, he could leave with the same spirit that he would go from his elders' quorum meeting'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1920, 117).

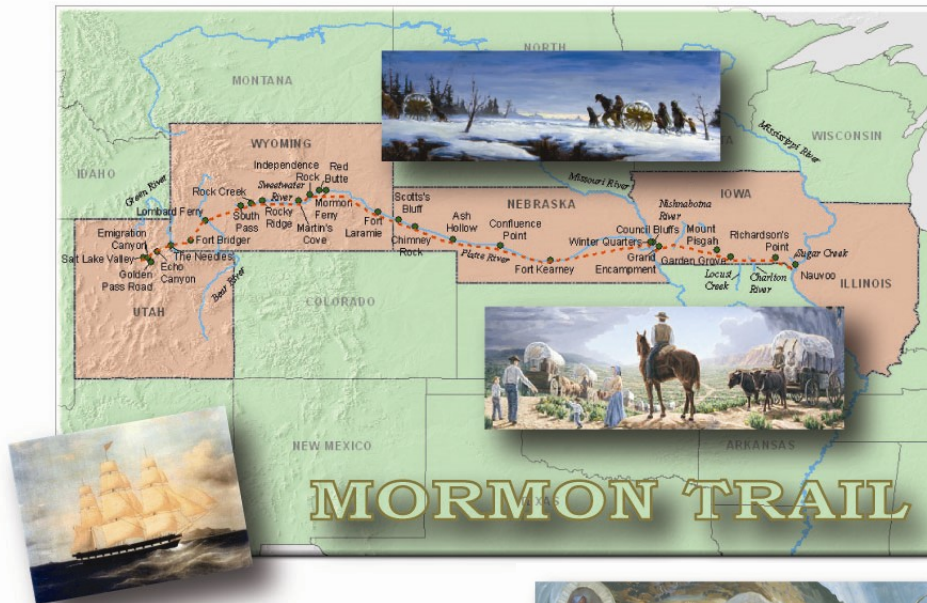
Elder M. Russell Ballard said:

"We are the inheritors of a tremendous heritage. Now it is our privilege and responsibility to be part of the Restoration's continuing drama, and there are great and heroic stories of faith to be written in our day. It will require every bit of our strength, wisdom, and energy to overcome the obstacles that will confront us. But even that will not be enough. We will learn, as did our pioneer ancestors, that it is only in faith—real faith, whole-souled, tested and tried—that we will find safety and confidence as we walk our own perilous pathways through life"

(Ensign, May 1997, 61).



Under the direction of President Brigham Young, the Saints journeyed to the Salt Lake Valley.



Two years before the Prophet Joseph Smith died, he prophesied that *“the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains,”* and that some of them would *“live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains”* (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 255).

In fulfillment of this prophecy, some 70,000 Church members from all over the world made the trek to Utah between 1847 and 1869.

Consider how you feel when you consider the legacy of faith and sacrifice that the pioneers and other Saints have given us. Who are the pioneers of the Church in your area? How can we pass on this same kind of legacy to those who will follow us?

Ponder the lessons we can learn from the pioneer trek to help us on our journey back to God’s presence.

Elder M. Russell Ballard, *“Life isn’t always easy. At some point in our journey we may feel much as the pioneers did as they crossed Iowa—up to our knees in*



Mary Fielding & Joseph Fielding Smith

mud, forced to bury some of our dreams along the way. We all face rocky ridges, with the wind in our face and winter coming on too soon. Sometimes it seems as though there is no end to the dust that stings our eyes and clouds our vision. Sharp edges of despair and discouragement jut out of the terrain to slow our passage. ... Occasionally we reach the top of one summit in life, as the pioneers did, only to see more mountain peaks ahead, higher and more challenging than the one we have just traversed. Tapping unseen reservoirs of faith and endurance, we, as did our forebears, inch ever forward toward that day when our voices can join with those of all pioneers who have endured in faith, singing, ‘All is well! All is well!’” (*Ensign*, May 1997, 61).

Conclusion

In many ways our journey toward eternal life is similar to the journey of the pioneers across America. The pioneers crossed the plains at profound personal sacrifice and often under severe hardship. Demonstrating great faith, courage, and endurance, they set an example for us to follow.

This is our day in the history of the kingdom of God on the earth. The pioneers laid the foundation, but it is now up to us to complete the work. As **President James E. Faust** testified, *“Faith in every future footstep will fulfill prophetic vision concerning the glorious destiny of this Church”* (*Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 42).

Many of the ways in which the pioneers were counseled in **D&C 136** to prepare for their journey apply to our journey also. We are encouraged to show our gratitude for the pioneers by continuing our legacy of faith.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- In what ways have you found the Lord’s instructions highlighted in this lesson to be true in your life?
- How do you feel when you consider the legacy of faith and sacrifice that the pioneers and other Saints have given us?
- How can you pass on this same kind of legacy to those who will follow you?

