Lesson 3
Joseph Smith—History 1:1–26

Verses 1–2: Why does Joseph write this history? What does that say to us about its usefulness to us?

Verses 3–4: Why does Joseph give this account of his family as part of his account of the origins of the Church? What does his birth, the places his family has lived, and the number and names of his family members have to do with explaining the “rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”?

Verse 5: Joseph emphasizes the divisions that the “excitement on the subject of religion” caused. Why does he do so; what’s the point? How can we preach the gospel without causing similar divisions?

Verse 6: What caused the strife among the sects?

Verses 8–10: What about Methodism might have attracted Joseph Smith? What things prevented him from joining the Methodists?

Verses 11–12: Was Joseph reading casually, or was he studying seriously? What in these verses might give you the answer to the question?

Verse 13: What gave Joseph the confidence to ask which religion was right? (What does it mean to give liberally? What does the word *upbraid* mean?)
Verse 14: When Joseph says he had never made the attempt to pray vocally, what does he mean? Do you suppose that he had never offered the prayer over the food at home? Why is it significant that he prayed vocally?

Verses 15–16: Why does this dark power prevent Joseph from speaking? Compare Joseph’s experience to that of Alma the Younger. How is it different? How is it the same? What might the differences and similarities tell us?

Verse 17: Why doesn’t Joseph name the two personages who appear to him?

Verses 18–19: In what sense were the sects wrong? What does it mean to say that they are an abomination to the Lord? (How, for example, can we explain that to nonmembers without offending them?)

What does the word professor mean here? University teacher? What is its literal meaning?

What does it mean to draw near to the Lord with our lips but to have our hearts far from him?

How might we sometimes teach for doctrines the commandments of men but deny the power of godliness?

Verse 20: What things might the Lord have said to Joseph that he didn’t write? The implication is that he could write them later. What might they have been?

Our pictures often show Joseph kneeling as he listens to the Son, but what might this verse indicate?

Some have used Joseph’s failure to tell his mother what happened as evidence that his story isn’t true, that it was
made up years later. Why do you think he didn’t tell his mother of this experience?

**Verse 21:** Why does he tell the preacher what he didn’t tell his mother?

**Verses 22–23:** In what ways might the “professors of religion” have “excited the public mind” against Joseph? Why did they react so strongly against Joseph?

**Verse 24:** Joseph compares his experience to that of Paul. How are those experiences the same? How are they different? What might those similarities and differences tell us?

**Verses 25–26:** How would you describe the tone of these verses? What might that tone say about Joseph and his story?

Though the unconverted might believe Joseph is deceived, I don’t think they can read this story as the story of a liar. How would a deceived person perhaps produce a different story than one who is lying?

There seem to be no people in his life from this period, outside of his family, who remember Joseph Smith telling of the first vision. How would you explain that, given the account Joseph gives here of his persecution for his vision? If a nonmember asked you about this, what would you say?