

Getting to Know Brother Joseph

Resources from the Joseph Smith Papers for Latter-day Saints

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I had just wrapped up a presentation on the Joseph Smith Papers (JSP) to an Education Week class at Brigham Young University. A woman approached me, somewhat timidly. After saying hello, she got right to the point. “I know the Joseph Smith Papers are a valuable resource,” she said, “but how can I use them? I’m just an ordinary member of the Church. Where do I start? How do I begin?”

Those questions were not unfamiliar to me. I had heard them many times before. People were aware of declarations from Church leaders such as former Church Historian Elder Marlin K. Jensen, who said that the JSP was “the single most significant historical project of our generation,” but they wondered what that meant for them.¹ This woman and others with similar queries wondered how lay, interested Church members could navigate the massive amount of information the JSP had produced.

As a trained public historian, I have frequently explored questions about the impact of history on the general populace. Scholar Michael Kammen noted “that history is an essential ingredient in defining national, group, and personal identity,” and “that individuals and small groups who are strongly tradition-oriented commonly seek to stimulate a shared sense of the past within their region” or communities.² In the

1. Trent Toone, “A Look Back at the History of the Joseph Smith Papers, Its Impact and What’s Coming in 2023,” *Church News*, published by *Deseret News*, September 27, 2022, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/history/2022/9/27/23354978/joseph-smith-papers-project-history-2023/>.

2. Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (Vintage Books, 1991), 10.

case of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, history is a key component of the Saints' identity—and the identity of the Church itself. In fact, one of the first commandments Joseph Smith received after the formation of the Church was to keep a historical record (see D&C 21:1). But producing accurate and scholarly material that effectively engages the general Church membership can sometimes be challenging.

The JSP was conceived in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a way “to publish every extant document” composed by Joseph Smith “or by his scribes in his behalf, as well as other records that were created under his direction or that reflect his personal instruction or involvement.”³ The idea was to pattern the project after documentary editing projects at universities who publish the papers of the country's founders: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin, to name a few.⁴ Over the course of roughly twenty years, more than six hundred individuals worked on the JSP, producing twenty-seven print volumes, a website, and a host of other resources. The print volumes themselves contain 1,306 journal entries, 643 letters, and 155 revelations. The volumes total 18,882 pages, 7,457,072 words, and 49,687 footnotes.⁵ With such an abundance of information, it is no wonder that some Latter-day Saints find it daunting to approach the JSP.

Yet there is certainly a desire among many Church members to get to know Joseph Smith better, especially in an age where, as the angel Moroni prophesied in 1823, his name is “had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues” (JS-H 1:33). Working on the JSP, I understood that the project's primary audience comprised historians and religious studies scholars interested in Joseph Smith's life, the workings of the early Church, and the religious history of the United States. But my colleagues and I also realized that we had a strong secondary audience. Because members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints revere Joseph Smith as a prophet of God and the one who restored

3. Richard Bushman and Dean C. Jessee, “Joseph Smith and His Papers: An Introduction,” The Joseph Smith Papers, Church Historian's Press, accessed April 14, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/joseph-smith-and-his-papers-an-introduction>.

4. “The Washington Papers,” University of Virginia, <https://washingtonpapers.org/>; “The Papers of Thomas Jefferson,” Princeton University, <https://jeffersonpapers.princeton.edu/>; “The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,” Yale University, <https://franklinpapers.org/>. All websites accessed May 27, 2025.

5. Trent Toone, “After Two Decades, Church Celebrates Final Volume of the Joseph Smith Papers Project,” *Church News*, June 27, 2023, 6–7, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/history/2023/6/27/23759796/joseph-smith-papers-final-volume-published-hyrum-smith-martyrdom-elder-david-a-bednar/>.

the true Church of Christ to the earth, many have a strong interest in his life. We hoped that the project would thus engage both scholars and Church members.

However, we also understood that the published volumes of the JSP were written as reference books, not as something someone would read from cover to cover. The annotation accompanying the primary historical documents is written in a scholarly tone that is not as accessible for general audiences. Moreover, some of the “barbed wire” that documentary editors place in transcriptions (to convey deletions, insertions, and other characteristics of original documents) can be overwhelming. In addition to the massive amount of information contained in the JSP, these are other reasons why Church members can find the project difficult to navigate.

Even with these challenges, there are ways that the JSP volumes can be useful resources for Latter-day Saints—both directly and through other projects that draw from the JSP. This article will discuss some of the benefits the JSP can bring to Church members. It will focus on how it has influenced other products, what resources the JSP has generated for Latter-day Saints, and the impact getting to know Joseph Smith through the JSP can have on Church members’ testimonies of prophets and Jesus Christ.

Influence on Other Products

The JSP has benefited Church members by influencing other publications geared toward a general Church audience. One of the most important of these was the 2013 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. As the Church was preparing that edition, members of the Church’s Scriptures Committee approached Elder Marlin K. Jensen, the Church Historian at the time, and Richard E. Turley Jr., assistant Church Historian, and asked for their input. The two informed the committee that the JSP had information that could correct dates and places of revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants headings as well as provide new or revised context for the revelations. Matthew Grow, the director of the Church History Department’s Publications Division, received the assignment to coordinate with JSP historians and prepare a set of recommendations.⁶

One reason why the JSP team was able to provide corrections to headings was because of its access to the Book of Commandments and

6. “The Genesis of the Joseph Smith Papers Project,” October 2, 2017, herein, 91.

Revelations, a record book that had long been out of the public eye. Church leaders purchased a blank book sometime in the year following the Church's organization in April 1830, and John Whitmer, who was appointed in March 1831 to "write & keep a regulal [regular] history" of the Church, probably began copying revelations in it around the same time as his appointment. The versions of many revelations in this record are the earliest versions we have. Whitmer "likely composed" his own headings to the revelations, providing dates and locations of where they were given. The record book was ultimately used as the source text for the printing of the Book of Commandments in 1833.⁷

For some revelations, the information provided by Whitmer and other scribes either differed from what was in the headings in the Doctrine and Covenants or provided more specificity. For example, the heading to section 48 stated that the revelation was given in March 1831. Because of the heading in the Book of Commandments and Revelations, we now know that Joseph Smith received the revelation on March 10, 1831.⁸

Changes to the heading of section 49 were even more significant. That heading had the date of the revelation as March 1831. However, the version in the Book of Commandments and Revelations clearly states that the revelation was given on May 7, 1831—two months later. This correction is important because the revelation commanded Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, and Leman Copley to go to North Union, Ohio, and preach the gospel to a community of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (also known as Shakers), a group to which Copley had previously belonged. If the revelation was given in March, then Rigdon, Pratt, and Copley would have waited two months before making their journey to North Union since they did not arrive there until early May. Because of the corrected date, it is clear that the three immediately obeyed the revelation's direction and traveled to the Shaker

7. "Revelation, circa 8 March 1831–B [D&C 47]," in Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds., *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2013), 286, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-circa-8-march-1831-b-dc-47/1>; see also Historical Introduction, "Revelation Book 1," in Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1: Manuscript Revelation Books*, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2011), 5–8, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/5#historical-intro>. Original spelling and strikethroughs are retained for all JSP documents herein.

8. The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 87 (hereafter cited as Doctrine and Covenants [1981]); "Revelation, circa 8 March 1831–B [D&C 47]," 286–88.

community.⁹ The correction highlights how important obedience to these commandments was to early Church leaders.

Other changes to the headings came from deeper research by JSP historians regarding the context behind the revelations. Sections 78, 82, 92, 96, and 104 in the Doctrine and Covenants all refer to individuals belonging to an “order” that would “manage the affairs of the poor, and all things pertaining to the bishopric both in the land of Zion and in the land of Kirtland” (D&C 82:11–12, 20). Some sections refer to this as “the united order” (D&C 92:1; 104:1). Because Brigham Young established united orders in Utah Territory during the 1860s and 1870s, many believed that the word “order” in these sections referred to a united order. For example, the Guide to the Scriptures entry on churchofjesuschrist.org for “United Order” defines it as “an organization through which the Saints in the early days of the restored Church sought to live the law of consecration” and refers to verses in sections 78, 82, 92, 96, and 104.¹⁰

However, as JSP historians worked on these revelations, it became apparent that the earliest versions did not refer to an “order,” but to a “firm.” In addition, the earliest versions of sections 78 and 82 did not contain the language “regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouses for the poor” (D&C 78:3–4; see also 82:12) when stating the purpose of the organization. Instead, the revelations referred to a “firm” that would “be an organization of the Literary and Merchantile establishments of my church.”¹¹

If these revelations did not refer to united orders that would later become prevalent in Utah Territory, what did they refer to? And why does different language now exist in the revelations? Work by JSP historians explained that the organization set up at this time was actually called the United Firm. Members of the firm each had stewardship over some aspect of the Church’s financial and literary endeavors, including the publication of the Book of Commandments in Independence,

9. Doctrine and Covenants [1981], 88; “Revelation, 7 May 1831 [D&C 49],” in MacKay and others, *Documents*, Volume 1, 297–98, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-7-may-1831-dc-49/1#historical-intro>; Lawrence R. Flake, “A Shaker View of a Mormon Mission,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 1 (1979): 94–99.

10. “United Order,” Guide to the Scriptures, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed April 15, 2025, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/gs/united-order>.

11. “Revelation, 1 March 1832 [D&C 78],” in Matthew C. Godfrey, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds., *Documents*, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 198, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-march-1832-dc-78/1>.

Missouri, and the operation of Church stores (or storehouses) in Kirtland, Ohio, and Independence.¹²

Who were the individuals with those responsibilities? A revelation dictated by Joseph Smith in November 1831 appointed Joseph Smith, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon, and William W. Phelps as “stewards over the revelations”—those responsible for their publication.¹³ Other revelations designated Newel K. Whitney’s Kirtland store as a storehouse for the Church and directed Sidney Gilbert to establish a storehouse in Independence.¹⁴ Finally, Edward Partridge and Whitney were bishops in the Church, responsible for temporal matters.¹⁵ It made sense, then, that these nine men were the ones commanded to establish the United Firm in 1832. Later revelations added another two men to the firm: Frederick G. Williams and John Johnson, both of whom had large landholdings in Ohio necessary to help fund the Church’s literary and mercantile endeavors.¹⁶

For approximately two years (1832–34), the United Firm was an important administrative body in the Church. Not only did it help direct the Church’s finances, but since it included Church leaders in

12. The project built on the work of Lyndon W. Cook, who was one of the first historians to discuss the United Firm. Lyndon W. Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration* (Grandin Book, 1985), 57–70.

13. “Revelation, 12 November 1831 [D&C 70]” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 140, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-november-1831-dc-70/1>.

14. “Revelation, 4 December 1831–B [D&C 72:9–23],” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 151 and 152 n. 56, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-december-1831-b-dc-729-23/1#historical-intro>; “Revelation, 20 July 1831 [D&C 57],” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 11, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-20-july-1831-dc-57/1>.

15. “Revelation, 4 February 1831 [D&C 41],” in MacKay and others, *Documents, Volume 1*, 241–45, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-february-1831-dc-41/1>; “Revelation, 4 December 1831–A [D&C 72:1–8],” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 146–50, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-december-1831-a-dc-721-8/1>; “Revelation, 11 November 1831–B [D&C 107 (partial)],” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 132–36, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-11-november-1831-b-dc-107-partial/1>.

16. “Revelation, 15 March 1833 [D&C 92],” in Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, Brent M. Rogers, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds., *Documents, Volume 3: February 1833–March 1834*, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian’s Press, 2014), 37, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-15-march-1833-dc-92/1>; “Revelation, 4 June 1833 [D&C 96],” in Dirkmaat and others, *Documents, Volume 3*, 111–12, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-june-1833-dc-96/2>.

both Ohio and Missouri, it served as a way for Joseph Smith to obtain information about the progress of the city of Zion in Missouri.¹⁷ The assets of the firm were necessary for the financing of Church endeavors, such as the construction of the Kirtland House of the Lord.¹⁸ However, the expulsion of the Saints from Jackson County, Missouri, destroyed two important components of the firm: the printing office in Independence and Gilbert's storehouse. Mounting debts from the stocking of goods in the storehouses, the purchase of land, and a new printing press for the Church pushed the firm into financial turmoil.¹⁹ In April 1834, Joseph Smith dictated a revelation that assigned the different stewardships of the firm to individual firm members.²⁰ This effectively ended the United Firm. Apparently wanting to prevent creditors from holding other members of the firm responsible for its debts, Joseph Smith directed that language be changed in the revelations pertaining to the United Firm, including the names of the individuals involved, to mask the true purposes of the firm and to protect identities.²¹

With these findings, new information was added to the headings of sections 78, 82, and 104 in the Doctrine and Covenants. In addition, JSP historians published research on the United Firm in *BYU Studies* and *Revelations in Context*.²² This allowed Latter-day Saints to have a better

17. See, for example, "Letter to Edward Partridge and Others, 30 March 1834," in Dirkmaat and others, *Documents, Volume 3*, 488–98, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-others-30-march-1834/1>.

18. Historical Introduction, "Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126]," in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 335, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/1#historical-intro>.

19. Matthew C. Godfrey, "Newel K. Whitney and the United Firm," in *Revelations in Context: The Stories Behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants*, Matthew McBride and James Goldberg, eds. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), 145; also available at Matthew C. Godfrey, "Newel K. Whitney and the United Firm," Doctrine and Covenants Study, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed April 14, 2025, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/newel-k-whitney-and-the-united-firm>.

20. "Revelation, 23 April 1834 [D&C 104]," in Matthew C. Godfrey, Brenden W. Rensink, Alex D. Smith, Max H. Parkin, and Alexander L. Baugh, eds., *Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2016), 23–31, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-23-april-1834-dc-104/1>.

21. Max H. Parkin, "Joseph Smith and the United Firm: The Growth and Decline of the Church's First Master Plan of Business and Finance, Ohio and Missouri, 1832–1834," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 33–34; David J. Whittaker, "Substituted Names in the Published Revelations of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 23, no. 1 (1983): 103–12; Godfrey, "Newel K. Whitney and the United Firm," 146.

22. Parkin, "Joseph Smith and the United Firm," 5–66; Godfrey, "Newel K. Whitney and the United Firm," 142–47.

understanding of the contents of these sections and restored to the historical record an important administrative body of the Church that had largely been overlooked or misinterpreted.

In total, the JSP research corrected errors, added additional context, or made other adjustments to approximately eighty section headings in the 2013 Doctrine and Covenants. At the same time, headings were added to the two Official Declarations that provided important context for the Church's historical practice of plural marriage and the racial priesthood and temple restrictions.²³ These additions and changes help Latter-day Saints gain new insights into our history and provide more accurate context for the Doctrine and Covenants.

Another noteworthy publication to which the JSP contributed is *Revelations in Context: The Stories Behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants*, published by the Church in 2016. This book contains over fifty short essays on the historical context of nearly every section in the Doctrine and Covenants. JSP scholars wrote many of these essays, and nearly all were based on research and scholarship completed as part of the JSP project. Many of the essays relied on information from the historical introductions to revelations in the *Documents* series of the JSP about how, where, and why Joseph Smith received a revelation. The historical introductions also provide background about the individuals to whom revelations were directed—useful information for the context of the revelations.

For example, the essay in *Revelations in Context* on section 33—a revelation for Ezra Thayer and Northrop Sweet—cites the JSP to correct a mistake that some historians had made: identifying Ezra Thayer as hailing from Massachusetts and being married to Polly Wales. But *Documents, Volume 1*, and the biographical database of the JSP²⁴ correctly identifies Thayer as coming from New York and being married to Elizabeth Frank—a fact that the *Revelations in Context* essay points out

23. “Summary of Approved Adjustments for the 2013 Edition of the Scriptures,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/scriptures/approved-adjustments_eng.pdf; “Adjustments to the Introductory Material of the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/scriptures/scripture-comparison_eng.pdf.

24. “Revelation, October 1830–B [D&C 33],” in MacKay and others, *Documents Volume 1*, 205–8, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-october-1830-b-dc-33/1#historical-intro>; “Thayer, Ezra,” People, Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/ezra-thayer>.

in a footnote.²⁵ Although some may believe that such details are inconsequential, they help preserve a more accurate historical record and ensure that early Church members are not forgotten or misidentified.

Another essay in *Revelations in Context* covers a few weeks in the fall of 1831 when William E. McLellin witnessed Joseph Smith dictating several revelations, including what are currently sections 1, 65, 66, 67, 68, and 133 in the Doctrine and Covenants. Drawing from the historical introductions to these documents in *Documents, Volume 2*, of the JSP, the article traces McLellin's involvement in the revelations, providing a personal face to the documents. Although McLellin would later leave the Church, he testified that he could not refute that these revelations came from God through Joseph Smith.²⁶

An important factor with *Revelations in Context* is its easy accessibility. In addition to a printed volume that is available through Church Distribution Services, the book is in the Gospel Library app. The *Come, Follow Me* manual also provides links to the essays in pertinent lessons. This allows Church members to readily access context behind the revelations based largely on the work of the JSP.

Another excellent resource for Latter-day Saints is volume one of *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*.²⁷ This volume covers the Church's history from Joseph Smith's First Vision in 1820 to the dedication of the temple in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1846, shortly before the Saints departed that city for the Great Basin. Written in an accessible narrative style geared especially toward the rising generation, *Saints* tells the history of the Church during this time through accounts of individuals who lived through and experienced that history. Because Joseph Smith is a key figure in the volume, *Saints* relies heavily on the JSP to tell the story of Joseph and the Church. Footnotes throughout the volume point readers toward documents and analysis in the JSP, allowing readers to access the findings of the project more easily. Patrick Mason, current Leonard J. Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture at

25. See Matthew McBride, "Ezra Thayer: From Skeptic to Believer," in McBride and Goldberg, *Revelations in Context*, 61 n. 1, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/ezra-thayer-from-skeptic-to-believer>.

26. W. E. McLellin, *The Ensign of Liberty of the Church of Christ* 1, no. 4 (January 1848), 61; see Matthew C. Godfrey, "William McLellin's Five Questions," in McBride and Goldberg, *Revelations in Context*, 137–41, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/william-mccllins-five-questions>.

27. *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018).

Utah State University, declared that *Saints* helps “the person who has never picked up a book of church history or a volume of the Joseph Smith Papers Project” learn more about the early history of the Church based on information in the JSP.²⁸

For example, chapter 6 in *Saints, Volume 1*, deals with the translation of the Book of Mormon. The endnotes to this chapter cite over thirty different sources, of which half are contained in the JSP. Though many of these citations are to revelations or histories, other chapters contain references to Joseph Smith’s correspondence, journals, discourses, and meeting minutes—all of which are included in the JSP. The bibliography of *Saints* lists sixteen published volumes of the JSP as references. As the acknowledgements page in *Saints* explains, “The historical analysis in the book depends particularly on *The Joseph Smith Papers*.”²⁹

Joseph Smith Papers Resources

When many people think about the JSP, they think of the twenty-seven published volumes that contain a host of documents and information about the life and ministry of Joseph Smith. These volumes are the backbone of the JSP, but they are not the only products or resources that the project developed. One of the most useful resources is the JSP website, josephsmithpapers.org, a state-of-the-art site that contains an abundance of information. About eighteen months after the publication of a volume, the project uploads its contents to the website, including introductions and annotation. That means every document found in the published volumes is available online—and more.

For example, in 1836, Joseph Smith signed hundreds of priesthood licenses for individuals. Since these licenses would fill at least a couple of published volumes—and believing few would want to buy a volume containing just priesthood licenses—the JSP did not publish in print every license signed by Joseph, even though they are all considered Joseph Smith documents. Instead, the project only printed representative

28. Quotation in Peggy Fletcher Stack and Scott D. Pierce, “Mormon Church Publishes Its First Official History in Nearly a Century, and the Result is an Easy-to-Read Volume That Tackles Some Hard Facts,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2018/09/04/mormon-church-publishes/>; see also “First Volume of ‘Saints’ Now Available: Official Latter-day Saint History Published in 14 Languages,” Newsroom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, September 4, 2018, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-volume-saints-now-available>.

29. *Saints*, 683.

samples of these licenses in the published volumes. However, every one of these licenses is available on the JSP website.³⁰

Likewise, there are numerous Joseph Smith documents related to land purchases in Nauvoo, Illinois, including promissory notes and bonds. Representative examples of these documents were published in the printed volumes, but all the extant promissory notes and bonds are on the website.³¹ The website thus provides access to more documents than the printed volumes, especially routine documents pertaining to the administration of the Church.

Another helpful feature of the website is its inclusion of guides to certain types of Joseph Smith documents. These guides, located under the “Reference” drop-down menu under “Featured Topics,” provide a brief introduction to the class of documents and then a listing of each pertinent document. For example, someone interested in finding every Joseph Smith document written in his own hand could visit the “Documents in Joseph Smith’s Handwriting” featured topic, read about how rarely Smith wrote documents himself, and find links to every document in his handwriting.³² Other topics include “Joseph Smith’s Correspondence,” “Religious Freedom,” “Joseph Smith and the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” “Priesthood Restoration,” and “Sources behind the Doctrine and Covenants” (which provides links to the earliest extant version of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants).³³

30. For an example of a license in a print volume, see “License, 21 March 1836,” in Brent M. Rogers, Elizabeth A. Kuehn, Christian K. Heimburger, Max H. Parkin, Alexander L. Baugh, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838*, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian’s Press, 2017), 186–88. For a listing of licenses on the website, see “Priesthood Licenses Signed by Joseph Smith or the First Presidency,” Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 17, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/site/priesthood-licenses-signed-by-joseph-smith-or-the-first-presidency>.

31. For an example of these documents in a print volume, see “Land Transaction with Jane Miller, 6 June 1840,” in Matthew C. Godfrey, Spencer W. McBride, Alex D. Smith, and Christopher James Blythe, eds., *Documents, Volume 7: September 1839–January 1841*, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian’s Press, 2018), 203–11. For examples of these documents on the website, see the listing of documents under “Browse the Papers,” then “Documents,” then “1840,” Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 17, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/the-papers/documents/1840>.

32. “Documents in Joseph Smith’s Handwriting,” Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 17, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/site/documents-in-joseph-smiths-handwriting>.

33. “Featured Topics,” Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 17, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/finding-aids>.

An especially useful tool is “Sources for *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*,” which takes this well-known compilation of Joseph Smith’s teachings by Joseph Fielding Smith and provides links to the “earliest known primary sources” behind them. The hope is that the index will “aid researchers in finding more original texts for Joseph Smith quotations” since *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* “was based on B. H. Roberts’s *History of the Church*, which was in turn based on later copies of Joseph Smith documents found in his multivolume manuscript history.”³⁴

One other feature that might be of particular interest to Church members is a collection of short videos produced on various topics in the JSP. In these videos, most of which are under two minutes, a JSP historian shares information on topics such as attempts to extradite Joseph Smith to Missouri in the 1840s, baptisms for the dead in Nauvoo, the Kirtland House of the Lord, and the presence of women’s voices in early Latter-day Saint history. Individuals can watch the videos on the JSP website or on YouTube. They provide short, interesting snippets of Joseph Smith’s life and teachings.³⁵

Another JSP resource that can benefit Church members is the JSP podcast. In 2018, Spencer W. McBride, a JSP historian, received an assignment from the project’s management team to develop a podcast focused on the JSP. McBride’s podcast centers on themes or events in Joseph Smith’s life that are addressed over multiple episodes by scholars from the project as well as Church leaders and experts in the academy. The first event explored was the First Vision. This season was released in January 2020 and consisted of six episodes. Presented in a way to engage Church members interested in Church history, the podcast performed better than expected, leading to four more seasons covering the restoration of priesthood authority, the Nauvoo Temple, the Church in Kirtland, Ohio, and Joseph Smith’s martyrdom.³⁶

The JSP podcast is an excellent way for Latter-day Saints who are not academically trained in history or religious studies to access the findings

34. “Sources for *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*,” Joseph Smith Papers, accessed May 29, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/sources-for-teachings-of-js-by-joseph-fielding-smith>.

35. “Videos,” Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 17, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/media/videos>.

36. Each season of the podcast is available on the website and most streaming platforms. “Joseph Smith Papers Podcasts,” Media, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 17, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/joseph-smith-papers-podcasts>.

and analyses of the project. As McBride asked in the prologue to *The First Vision: A Joseph Smith Papers Podcast*, “Have you ever looked at the event [the First Vision] through the eyes of historians? . . . historians who have spent years immersed in Joseph Smith’s surviving documents—scholars, men and women who have walked the fields of history who can tell you what occurred thereon and why those events occurred the way that they did.” Doing so, McBride promised, would help listeners “find a story that is simultaneously familiar and new.”³⁷ This promise extends to the other podcast topics as well. Each episode is meant to be compact, interesting, insightful, and engaging.

In addition to the podcast, the JSP has numerous resources pertaining to the Doctrine and Covenants. An excellent way of finding these resources is by going to “Historical Resources” under “Doctrine and Covenants Study” through the “Church History” tab in the Gospel Library app. Divided into each *Come, Follow Me* curriculum week, this tool provides links to JSP study aids, including biographies of individuals and information about geographic places mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants. It also links to transcripts and images of the earliest copies of these revelations. For example, for the week focused on Doctrine and Covenants 46 through 48, there are links to the essays in *Revelations in Context* pertaining to these sections as well as links to JSP biographies of Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer, who are associated with these sections. Other links provide a description of the Isaac and Lucy Morley Farm, a chronology of events surrounding the timeframe of these revelations, and the earliest extant copies of the three sections.³⁸ These resources can enhance a study of these sections and offer a deeper glimpse into their historical context.³⁹

37. “Introducing the First Vision’ (The First Vision Podcast, Prologue): Transcript,” Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 17, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/the-first-vision-podcast-episode-0-transcript>.

38. “Doctrine and Covenants 46–48,” Doctrine and Covenants Study, Historical Resources, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/doctrine-and-covenants-historical-resources-2025/20>.

39. Another useful Doctrine and Covenants resource is an ebook collection of all the historical introductions to and transcripts of revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants as found in the Joseph Smith Papers Documents series. The Church Historian’s Press published this compilation in 2020 and updated it in 2024. See Matthew C. Godfrey, R. Eric Smith, Matthew J. Grow, and Ronald K. Esplin, eds., *Joseph Smith’s Revelations: A Doctrine and Covenants Study Companion from the Joseph Smith Papers* (Church Historian’s Press, 2020); see also “Doctrine and Covenants Study Resources,” Joseph Smith

Showing Who Joseph Smith Really Was

To this point, this article has explored ways that the JSP can enhance our study and understanding of Joseph Smith, the era of Church history in which he lived, and the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. If the papers provided information only on these subjects, they would be a valuable resource. However, an exploration of the JSP can also enhance spiritual knowledge and understanding about Joseph Smith and his prophetic mission. It can help us see more fully how God works through his servants to further his work and glory of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal lives of his children (see Moses 1:39). It can also deepen our testimony of Jesus Christ and his role in the plan of salvation.

Studying Joseph Smith's life through the JSP has helped me understand his character—who he was as a person. In the past and currently, there are many who disparage Joseph Smith as an impostor, a charlatan, and a megalomaniac. Yet my study of Joseph Smith's life has not revealed a person with these characteristics. Instead, it has shown me a man with flaws and imperfections, as we all have, but who did his best to do what he believed God had commanded him to do. He was a man who cared deeply about his family, the Latter-day Saints, and those in spiritual and temporal need.

One of the ways that we can better perceive Joseph's character is by reading descriptions of him by people who encountered him—especially those who had no reason or motive to depict the Prophet either in a positive or a negative way. To many of these observers, Joseph came across as a man who was sincere and unassuming. For example, in 1840, a Pennsylvania journalist named Matthew L. Davis was in Washington, D.C., as a correspondent. Joseph Smith was also in the nation's capital, having gone there to petition the president of the United States and Congress for redress for the Saints' expulsion from Missouri. While Joseph was there, he preached to a congregation about the tenets of the Church. Davis attended and wrote a letter to his wife, Mary, in Pennsylvania with his observations of “Joe Smith, the celebrated Mormon,” and “his doctrine.” Hoping to “understand his tenets, as Explained by himself,” Davis was favorably impressed with the Prophet. “He is not an Educated man,” Davis told Mary, “but he is a plain, sensible, strong minded man.” Davis continued, “Every thing [Joseph Smith] says, is said in a manner to leave an impression that he is sincere.” Joseph did not strike Davis as

pretentious; instead, “his dress” marked him as “a plain, unpretending Citizen.” Likewise, Joseph did not portray himself as any kind of remarkable person, his calling and spiritual experiences notwithstanding. “He remarked that he had been represented as pretending to be a Saviour, a Worker of Miracles,” Davis stated. “All this was false. He made no such pretensions. He was but a man, he said—a plain untutored man; seeking what he should do to be saved.”⁴⁰

The politician Josiah Quincy Jr. had a similar impression of the Prophet. He visited Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1844, shortly before Joseph Smith was killed, and described him as “a man of commanding appearance,” “a hearty, athletic fellow,” and one who wore “the costume of a journeyman carpenter.”⁴¹ He did not appear to be anyone remarkable or someone who was prideful, egotistical, or narcissistic. Indeed, the descriptions given by Quincy and Davis are not of a megalomaniac; they are of a man who was sincere and unpretentious in his appearance and his mannerisms.

Of course, Joseph did not come across that way to all observers, especially those who already had formed an opinion of him. Julius Alexander Reed, a Congregational minister, for example, wrote a disparaging report about Joseph after seeing him preach in Nauvoo in 1842. Reed accused Joseph of wearing “rich and genteel dress,” called him a “buffoon,” and criticized his “levity and turpitude.”⁴² However, for disinterested observers, Joseph Smith’s demeanor and dress was in stark contrast to what Reed depicted.

This touches on another important aspect of Joseph’s life highlighted by the JSP: He was not a perfect individual and never described himself as perfect. He knew that he had faults and weaknesses just like anyone who lives on the earth, the Savior Jesus Christ excepted. George Washington Taggart, a member of the Church writing to family members in

40. M. L. Davis to Mary Davis, February 6, 1840, 1–2, holograph, Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/bf97bc6f-31de-420b-8e45-82c12270814c/0/0>, emphasis in original; see also “Discourse, 5 February 1840,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 7*, 175–79, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-5-february-1840/1>.

41. As cited in Richard Lyman Bushman, with Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 3; see also Jed Woodworth, “*Josiah Quincy’s 1844 Visit with Joseph Smith*,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000): 71–87.

42. [Julius Alexander Reed], “Letter to the Editor,” *Congregational Journal*, March 16, 1843, 2; “Discourse, 25 April 1841, as Reported by Julius Alexander Reed,” 1, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed May 29, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-25-april-1841-as-reported-by-julius-alexander-reed/1>.

1843, declared that Joseph “does not pretend to be a man with out failings and follies.” He was not “puffed up with His greatness as many suppose.”⁴³ Another observer commented that Joseph Smith “did not profess to be a *very good man*, but acknowledged himself a sinner like other men.”⁴⁴ But Joseph used his weaknesses to teach the Saints that they should help each other overcome their failings. As he said to a group of recently arrived members from New York, “they must not expect him to be perfect; if they expected perfection from him, he should expect it from them, but if they would bear with his infirmities and the infirmities of the brethren, he would likewise bear with their infirmities.”⁴⁵

Joseph Smith was also not afraid to publish revelations that pointed to his imperfections and mistakes. When the Book of Commandments was printed in 1833, the second revelation in that compilation was one where God declared that Joseph had “oft . . . transgressed the commandments and the laws of God.” The revelation told the Prophet that he had “suffered the counsel of thy director to be trampled upon from the beginning.” If he did not repent, he would “be delivered up and become as other men, and have no more gift.”⁴⁶ This does not sound like something that a power-hungry man would publish.

Although Joseph Smith himself was gregarious and generally enjoyed being around people, he had experiences in his life that made him feel at times like an outsider. After his vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ in the Sacred Grove, a trusted spiritual leader told him that the experience was of the devil. “He treated my communication not only lightly but with great contempt,” Joseph recalled. This rebuke must have stung

43. “George W. Taggart to [his brothers in New Hampshire],” September 10, 1843, Albert Taggart Correspondence, 1842–1848, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Ronald O. Barney, “‘As Free from Dissimulation as Any Man’: The Authentic Joseph Smith,” in *Know Brother Joseph: New Perspectives on Joseph Smith’s Life and Character*, ed. R. Eric Smith, Matthew C. Godfrey, and Matthew J. Grow (Deseret Book, 2021), 191.

44. John Smith, “Mormonism,” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 13 (May 15, 1843): 200, emphasis in original; see also Barney, “‘As Free from Dissimulation as Any Man,’” 191.

45. “Discourse, 29 October 1842,” in Spencer W. McBride, Jeffrey D. Mahas, Brett D. Dowdle, and Tyson Reeder, eds., *Documents, Volume 11: September 1842–February 1843*, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian’s Press, 2020), 190, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-29-october-1842/1>.

46. “Book of Commandments, 1833,” in Robin Scott Jensen, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Riley M. Lormer, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 2: Published Revelations*, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 19, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-commandments-1833/11>; see also Doctrine and Covenants 3:6, 15, 11.

the fourteen-year-old, as did the “great persecution” that followed.⁴⁷ Perhaps because of experiences such as these, Joseph sought out those who were feeling out of place and helped them feel a part of the larger group.

For example, there were two teenagers in the Camp of Israel (Zion’s Camp) expedition who recorded their interactions with Joseph Smith.⁴⁸ One of these was fourteen-year-old Lyman Littlefield. At one point on the expedition, Littlefield was feeling sorry for himself because he was not allowed to participate in a military parade with the men of the camp. He sat on a rock, feeling like he did not belong. Littlefield recalled what happened next: “While thus seated, the Prophet Joseph Smith, who happened to be passing by in quite a hurry, noticed me. He stepped to where I sat alone.” Joseph “really halted in his hurry to notice me—only a little boy. Placing one of his hands upon my head, he said: ‘Well, bub, is there no place for you?’” Then the Prophet walked off.⁴⁹

Though this was not a large gesture that Joseph Smith made, his willingness to notice Littlefield had a major impact. Littlefield later declared, “This recognition from the man whom I then knew was a Prophet of God created within me a tumult of emotions. I could make him no reply. My young heart was filled with joy to me unspeakable.”⁵⁰

Joseph Smith had a similar impact on his sixteen-year-old cousin George A. Smith. George did not have a lot of confidence when he joined the Camp of Israel. He was self-conscious about his appearance, especially his larger size, his unfashionable clothes, and not being able to see well. Perhaps recognizing George’s lack of confidence, Joseph Smith gave the teenager an assignment: Interact with curious onlookers who wanted more information about the group when it marched through

47. “History Drafts, 1838–Circa 1841,” in Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844* (Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 216, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/4>; see also JS–H 1:21–22.

48. “JS and a group of approximately one hundred men had left Kirtland, Ohio, on 5 May, bound for Missouri to aid the Saints who had been expelled from Jackson County in November 1833.” This group of men was known as “the Camp of Israel (and later Zion’s Camp).” “Letter to Emma Smith, 18 May 1834,” Historical Introduction, in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 49, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-18-may-1834/1#historical-intro>.

49. L. O. Littlefield, “The Prophet Joseph Smith in Zion’s Camp,” *Juvenile Instructor* 27, no. 4 (February 15, 1892): 109; “Littlefield, Lyman Omer,” People, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 11, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/lyman-omer-littlefield>.

50. Littlefield, “Prophet Joseph Smith in Zion’s Camp,” 109.

their town. “Joseph invited me to throw myself in a position to answer . . . questions,” George remembered. The invitation helped George have “many amusing conversations with inquisitive strangers,” which he found enjoyable. Joseph’s invitation may have helped him gain self-assurance.⁵¹

These accounts indicate that Joseph Smith had both the tendency and the ability to help those who did not feel like they belonged. He was inclusive, going out of his way to notice individuals who were not part of the larger group and bringing them in. Of course, this does not mean that Joseph was perfect in his human relations. He had a temper and could sometimes act rashly in situations where he felt offended or belittled. But the JSP highlights another attribute of Joseph: the Prophet’s willingness to admit when he was wrong and ask for forgiveness.

One example of this is particularly instructive. In February 1835, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris called twelve men to serve as Apostles in the Church. Not long after, Joseph Smith directed the Twelve Apostles to serve a mission to the eastern United States where they were to solicit funds from Church members “for the construction of the House of the Lord in Kirtland, Ohio; for the redemption of church members’ lands in Jackson County, Missouri, from which the Saints had been violently expelled; “and for the printing of the Doctrine and Covenants.”⁵² After a few weeks, Joseph heard a report from Oliver Cowdery’s brother that the Twelve were not fulfilling these responsibilities. A letter from Apostle William E. McLellin to his wife, Emeline Miller McLellin, also apparently disparaged Sidney Rigdon’s leadership of a school in Kirtland. In response, Joseph, his counselors in the presidency of the high priesthood, and other Church leaders wrote a fiery letter to the Apostles, condemning them for not fulfilling their mission and accusing them of establishing themselves “as an independent counsel subject to no authority of the church—a kind of out laws.”⁵³

After returning to Kirtland from their mission, the Twelve asked to meet with the presidency of the high priesthood and the presidency of the Missouri high council about the letter and the accusation that the

51. “Memoirs of George A. Smith, circa 1860–1882,” 26 [image 34], holograph, Autobiographical Writings, George A. Smith Papers, 1834–1877, Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/4c08ca0f-21d3-4f93-bce3-907010163446/0/33>.

52. “Letter to the Quorum of the Twelve, 4 August 1835,” in Godfrey and others, *Documents*, Volume 4, 372, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-quorum-of-the-twelve-4-august-1835/2#historical-intro>.

53. “Letter to the Quorum of the Twelve, 4 August 1835,” 376.

Twelve were not fulfilling their duties. At this meeting, held on September 26, 1835, the Twelve were cleared of the accusations. However, some lingering feelings of resentment remained, leading to another meeting on January 16, 1836, between the Twelve and the presidency of the high priesthood. At this meeting, the letter from Joseph Smith and other Church leaders to the Twelve was raised again, with several Apostles saying that the communication made them believe “that the presidency had lost confidence in them.” The Prophet responded by saying that he “had not lost confidence in them.” He acknowledged that “the chastning contained in the letter in question . . . might have been expressed in too harsh language; which was not intentional.”⁵⁴ He asked the Apostles to forgive him “in as much as I have hurt your feelings.” Joseph continued, “I have sometimes spoken to[o] harsh from the impulse of the moment,” and he asked again for forgiveness. “I love you and will hold you up with all my heart in all righteousness before the Lord,” he concluded.⁵⁵ This seemed to heal the discord between the presidency and the Twelve.⁵⁶ In this instance, Joseph Smith had no issue with admitting he made a mistake and that he was sorry for it. This was not an isolated event in his life. In fact, Joseph frequently seemed eager to rectify past mistakes and heal the friction caused by hasty words or actions.⁵⁷

Perhaps one of the most significant things that the JSP shows is how the Prophet’s teachings and life emphasize the importance of Jesus Christ. There are numerous examples throughout the papers of Joseph Smith where he speaks about Jesus Christ or witnesses of his life and Atonement. These include Joseph’s retelling of some of his earliest spiritual experiences. In his 1832 account of the First Vision, for example, Joseph explained that he “cried unto the Lord for mercy” after becoming convinced of his need for repentance “for there was none else to whom I could go and to obtain mercy.” After doing so, Joseph related that he “saw the Lord,” who forgave his sins.⁵⁸

54. “Minutes, 16 January 1836,” in Rogers and others, *Documents, Volume 5*, 151–52, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-16-january-1836/3>.

55. “Minutes, 16 January 1836,” 152.

56. “Minutes, 16 January 1836,” 149.

57. For another example, see Anthony R. Sweat, “‘The Spirit of Confession and Forgiveness’: Joseph Smith’s 1835 Reconciliation with His Brother William,” in Smith, Godfrey, and Grow, *Know Brother Joseph*, 104–9.

58. “History, circa Summer 1832” in Davidson and others, *Histories, Volume 1*, 12–13, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/3>.

Joseph Smith bore a powerful testimony after seeing the Savior on other occasions. In the account of “the Vision” of the afterlife that the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon jointly experienced in February 1832, they declared that they saw Jesus Christ “on the right hand of God & we heard the voice bearing record that he is the only begotten of the Father that by him and through him and of him the worlds are made.”⁵⁹

After the dedication of the House of the Lord in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836, the Savior visited Joseph and Oliver Cowdery. “His eyes were as a flame of fire,” Joseph’s journal reported, “the hair of his head was like the pure snow, his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun, and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters.” The Savior told Joseph and Oliver that their sins were forgiven and that he was their “Advocate with the Father.”⁶⁰

In an editorial published in the July 1838 issue of the *Elders’ Journal*, Joseph Smith made another strong declaration of the importance of Jesus Christ. Answering the question of what the “fundamental principles” of the Church were, he stated that they consisted of “the testimony of the apostles and prophets concerning Jesus Christ, ‘that he died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended up into heaven.’” “All other things,” the Prophet continued, “are only appendages to these, which pertain to our religion.” This clearly emphasized the centrality of Jesus Christ and his Atonement to the beliefs of the Latter-day Saints.⁶¹

The JSP, then, can help Latter-day Saints gain more information about Joseph Smith’s true character: how he was perceived by others, how he treated others, and how his teachings helped lead people to Jesus Christ. It does not depict a perfect Joseph Smith or a flawless Joseph Smith. Instead, it shows a man who did his best to try to fulfill what he believed God had asked him to do, regardless of the personal cost. It highlights a man who testified frequently of the importance of Jesus Christ to the world and tried to implement his teachings as he led the Church. All these things can help strengthen testimonies of Joseph Smith’s prophetic role.

59. “Vision, February 16, 1832 [Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24],” in Godfrey and others, *Documents*, Volume 2, 186, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/3>.

60. “Visions, April 3, 1836 [Doctrine and Covenants 110:3–5],” in Rogers and others, *Documents*, Volume 5, 226, 228, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/visions-3-april-1836-dc-110/1>.

61. “*Elders’ Journal*, July 1838,” 44, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed May 7, 2025, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-july-1838/12>.

Conclusion

The JSP is a treasure trove of information for both academics and Church members who want to know more about Joseph Smith. Although the JSP can seem daunting, there are resources for Latter-day Saints that will help them access the findings and information created by the JSP. These include books and projects that the JSP has influenced, such as *Revelations in Context*, *Saints* volume 1, and the revised headings in the 2013 Doctrine and Covenants. Additional resources include the JSP website with its finding aids, research helps, and videos, as well as the JSP podcast. Using these resources, Latter-day Saints can come to know who Joseph Smith really was and see his efforts to bring individuals closer to Jesus Christ.

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