
OBJECTIVE

Each young man will learn what it means to endure to the end and understand that the hardships of mortality can help us learn.

PREPARATION

1. Prayerfully study Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:34; 2 Nephi 2:11, 15–16, 22–24; 28:21; 31:16; Helaman 6:9–17; and Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–3, 6–8; 122:7–8.
 2. Materials needed:
 - a. Copies of the standard works (each young man should bring his own).
 - b. A piece of paper and a pencil for each young man.
 - c. Pencils for marking scriptures.
 3. Prepare a poster of 2 Nephi 31:16.
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**SUGGESTED
LESSON
DEVELOPMENT****Introduction**

Story

David Merrell stepped off the plane in Tokyo, eager to begin his mission. David was slender, clean cut, and slightly freckled. David was spiritual and had a positive attitude, but otherwise he was an average elder. He had to make the same adjustments to a mission that other elders make. He gradually began to find real joy and success as he humbled himself before the Lord.

One day, David noticed that a small growth on his shoulder had enlarged considerably. He went to a doctor to have it checked. He received tragic news in that doctor's office. He had a melanoma, a deadly form of cancer. Skilled Japanese surgeons removed the growth, but David was sent home for further surgery, which stripped him of the muscles in his shoulder and neck. Large arteries and veins were also removed, and David suffered great pain as the blood was rerouted to his brain.

His recovery was slow and painful, but his will was indomitable. He began to discover just how much spiritual strength he possessed. His only thought was to get back into the mission field. He swam daily in order to increase his physical strength. Finally he was ready. David felt a great, sweeping feeling of victory as he stepped off the airplane, this time in Oregon, where he was to continue his missionary labors.

David Merrell completed his mission in Oregon, and a year later he completed his earthly mission.

Chalkboard
discussion

Explain that it may seem that if a young man is in the mission field serving the Lord, he should be protected from all harm and illness.

- What can we learn from David Merrell's example?

Summarize the young men's thoughts on the chalkboard.

Writing activity

Distribute the paper and pencils. Ask each young man to write down a conflict, opposition, or problem he is now facing. Explain that no one will see his paper. Suggest that the young men take notes on how they can overcome the problem they wrote down.

Opposition in All ThingsScripture and
chalkboard
discussion

Explain that we can better understand why we have suffering and death if we understand the nature and purpose of mortality. Explain that the scriptures tell us why we have suffering and problems. Review what the young men have learned about the fall of Adam. Explain that the Fall brought into the world the possibility for *opposition*, or suffering and adversity.

Have the young men read 2 Nephi 2:11, 22–24.

- What reasons did Lehi give for the need of opposition in our lives? (Without opposition there would not be righteousness or wickedness, holiness or misery, good or bad.)

Discuss with the young men why there could be no righteousness, holiness, or good without opposition.

Have a young man read 2 Nephi 2:15–16. Write the word *agency* on the chalkboard, and ask one of the young men to read verse 16 again.

- What does opposition have to do with the principle of agency? (Without opposition, choice would not be possible; without choice, there would be no righteousness. Righteousness requires having a choice between good and evil and choosing the good.)

Innocent Suffering Brings Spiritual Growth When We Endure with Faith

Story

Ask the young men to listen for some of the hardships faced by early Church leaders in the following account:

“Joseph Smith and his five companions were imprisoned in Liberty, Clay County, for a period of six months. Here they suffered, during that time, many untold hardships. Much of the time they were bound in chains. Their food was often not fit to eat, and never wholesome. . . . Several times poison was administered to them in their food, which made them sick nigh unto death, and only the promised blessings of the Lord saved them. Their bed was on the floor, or on the flat side of a hewn white oak log, and in this manner they were forced to suffer. Is it any wonder that they cried in the anguish of their souls unto the Lord, for relief from such inhuman treatment?” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], p. 210).

Scriptures and discussion

Explain that sections 121 and 122 of the Doctrine and Covenants were given to the Prophet Joseph Smith while he was a prisoner in Liberty Jail. Read and discuss Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–3, 6–8, and 122:7–8 with the young men.

- Why did the Lord say he allowed Joseph Smith and the faithful Saints to go through so much suffering?

Story

In your own words, tell the following story of a young woman who suffered for the gospel. The story is related by President Gordon B. Hinckley.

“I have often read the words of a thirteen-year-old girl, my wife’s grandmother. . . . Her family was converted in Brighton, England, in 1856. They sold their possessions and sailed from Liverpool with 900 others on the vessel *Horizon*. After six weeks at sea they landed at Boston and then traveled by steam train to Iowa City for fitting out.

“There they purchased two yoke of oxen, one yoke of cows, a wagon, and a tent. They were assigned to travel with and assist one of the handcart companies.

“At Iowa City their first tragedy also occurred. Their youngest child, less than two years of age, suffering from exposure, died and was buried in a grave never again visited by a member of the family. My wife’s grandmother, then a thirteen-year-old girl, wrote of their experiences:

“ ‘We traveled from fifteen to twenty-five miles a day . . . till we got to the Platte River. . . . We caught up with the handcart companies that day. We watched them cross the river. There were great lumps of ice floating down the river. It was bitter cold. The next morning there were fourteen dead. . . . We went back to camp and had our prayers and . . . sang “Come, Come Ye Saints, No Toil Nor Labor Fear.” I wondered what made my mother cry that night. . . . The next morning my little sister was born. It was the twenty-third of September. We named her Edith. She lived six weeks and died. . . . She was buried at the last crossing of the Sweetwater.

“ ‘When we arrived at Devil’s Gate it was bitter cold. We left many of our things there. . . . My brother James . . . was as well as he ever was when we went to bed that night. In the morning he was dead. . . .

“My feet were frozen; also my brother’s and my sister’s. It was nothing but snow. We could not drive the pegs in our tents. . . . We did not know what would become of us. Then one night a man came to our camp and told us . . . Brigham Young had sent men and teams to help us. . . . We sang songs; some danced, and some cried. . . .

“My mother never got well. . . . She died between the Little and Big Mountains. . . . She was forty-three years of age. . . .

“We arrived in Salt Lake City nine o’clock at night the eleventh of December, 1856. Three out of the four that were living were frozen. My mother was dead in the wagon. . . .

“Early next morning Brigham Young came. . . . When he saw our condition, our feet frozen and our mother dead, tears rolled down his cheeks. . . .

“The doctor amputated my toes . . . while the sisters were dressing mother for her grave. . . . That afternoon she was buried.

“I have often thought of my mother’s words before we left England. “Polly, I want to go to Zion while my children are small so that they can be raised in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” ’ (Mary Goble Pay, MS in possession of author.)

“We need so very, very much a strong burning of that faith in the living God and in his living, resurrected Son, for this was the great, moving faith of our gospel forebears” (“The Faith of the Pioneers,” *Ensign*, July 1984, pp. 5–6).

Explain that Mary Goble Pay went on to raise a large and wonderful family, some of whom became great leaders in the Church.

Help bring out that those who persecuted and opposed the Saints had their agency as well as the Saints who embraced and defended the gospel. If we endure opposition well, often the most valuable gospel learning experiences come to us through trials and difficulties.

Ask the young men to listen to Elder Spencer W. Kimball’s thoughts:

“The basic Gospel law is Free Agency. To force us to be careful or righteous would be to nullify that fundamental law, and growth would be impossible.

“Should we be protected always from hardship, pain, suffering, sacrifice or labor? Should the Lord protect the righteous? Should He immediately punish the wicked? If growth comes from fun and ease and aimless irresponsibility, then why should we ever exert ourselves to work or learn or overcome? . . .

“Is there not wisdom in His giving us trials that we might rise above them, responsibilities that we might achieve, work to harden our muscles, sorrows to try our souls?” (*Tragedy or Destiny*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 6 Dec. 1955], p. 2).

- How can spiritual strength result from trials in our lives?
- How can experiencing illness or injury give us compassion?
- How can personal suffering help strengthen our love for the Savior? (It helps us appreciate his suffering for us.)

Quotation and discussion

By Enduring, Each of Us Can Overcome Sorrow and Disappointment

Chalkboard discussion

Explain that President Ezra Taft Benson gave a talk in general conference that deals with twelve ways that we can overcome sorrow, disappointment, and depression (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, pp. 91–93; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, pp. 65–67). Write each key word on the chalkboard and discuss it, using the quotation as needed. Explain that many problems may require only one or two of these solutions.

1. *Repentance*: “Sin creates disharmony with God and is depressing to the spirit. . . . Every law kept brings a particular blessing. Every law broken brings a particular blight. Those who are heavy laden with despair should come unto the Lord, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. (See Matt. 11:28–30.)”
2. *Prayer*: “Prayer in the hour of need is a great boon. From simple trials to our Gethsemanes, prayer can put us in touch with God, our greatest source of comfort and counsel.”

3. *Service*: “To lose yourself in righteous service to others can lift your sights and get your mind off personal problems, or at least put them in proper focus. ‘When you find yourself a little gloomy,’ said President Lorenzo Snow, ‘look around you and find somebody that is in a worse plight than yourself; go to him and find out what the trouble is, then try to remove it with the wisdom which the Lord bestows upon you; and the first thing you know, your gloom is gone, you feel light, the Spirit of the Lord is upon you, and everything seems illuminated.’ (Conference Report, 6 Apr. 1899, pp. 2–3.)”
 4. *Work*: “Work is our blessing, not our doom. . . . We should work at taking care of the spiritual, mental, social, and physical needs of ourselves and those whom we are charged to help. In the church of Jesus Christ there is plenty of work to do to move forward the kingdom of God. Every member a missionary, family genealogy and temple work, home evenings, receiving a Church assignment and magnifying it are but a few of our required labors.”
 5. *Health*: “The condition of the physical body can affect the spirit. That’s why the Lord gave us the Word of Wisdom. He also said that we should retire to our beds early and arise early (see D&C 88:124). . . . Food can affect the mind, and deficiencies in certain elements in the body can promote mental depression. . . . Rest and physical exercise are essential.”
 6. *Reading*: “Many a man in his hour of trial has turned to the Book of Mormon and been enlightened, enlivened, and comforted.
 “The psalms in the Old Testament have a special food for the soul of one in distress. . . . The words of the prophets, particularly the living president of the Church, are crucial reading and can give direction and comfort in an hour when one is down.”
 7. *Blessing*: “In a particularly stressful time . . . one can seek for a blessing under the hands of the priesthood. . . . The sacrament will [also] ‘bless . . . the souls’ (D&C 20:77, 79) of all those who worthily partake of it.”
 8. *Fasting*: “Periodic fasting can help clear up the mind and strengthen the body and the spirit. . . . To make a fast most fruitful, it should be coupled with prayer and meditation; . . . and it’s a blessing if one can ponder on the scriptures and the reason for the fast.”
 9. *Friends*: “The fellowship of true friends who can hear you out, share your joys, help carry your burdens, and correctly counsel you is priceless. . . .
 “Ideally, your family ought to be your closest friends. Most important, we should seek to become the friend of our Father in heaven and our brother Jesus the Christ.”
 10. *Music*: “Inspiring music may fill the soul with heavenly thoughts, move one to righteous action, or speak peace to the soul. . . . Elder Boyd K. Packer has wisely suggested memorizing some of the inspiring songs of Zion and then, when the mind is afflicted with temptations, to sing aloud. . . . This could also be done to crowd out debilitating, depressive thoughts.”
 11. *Endurance*: “There are times when you simply have to righteously hang on and outlast the devil until his depressive spirit leaves you. . . .
 “While you are going through your trial, you can recall your past victories and count the blessings that you do have with a sure hope of greater ones to follow if you are faithful.”
 12. *Goals*: “Every accountable child of God needs to set goals, short- and long-range goals. A man who is pressing forward to accomplish worthy goals can soon put despondency under his feet, and once a goal is accomplished, others can be set up.”
- Explain that by using one or more of these methods we can overcome sorrow, disappointment, despair, or discouragement. We can learn to overcome opposition.

The Savior Shows How to Endure to the End

Poster

Present the following scripture on a poster: “Unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved” (2 Nephi 31:16).

Chalkboard
discussion

- In what ways was the Savior's life difficult?

List the young men's responses on the chalkboard. Answers could include the following:

1. Though a king, he was born in a humble stable.
2. He was born into a world devoid of modern convenience.
3. He was scorned by his own kinsmen and driven from his home.
4. He accomplished his mission without "purse or scrip."
5. His own people had him put to death, yet he forgave them.

Scripture and
discussion

Have a young man read Matthew 27:46 and Luke 23:34.

- Why do you think Heavenly Father withdrew from the Savior at this time? (So he could accomplish his mission and endure to the end himself, as we all must do.)

Scriptures and
discussion

Sometimes the Test of Endurance Is Prosperity

Have the young men turn to Helaman 6:9–17, and have them read the verses silently.

- What happened to these people who seemed to have all that they wanted and seemed so highly blessed?

Have a young man read 2 Nephi 28:21.

Explain that Nephi predicted the conditions of the last days. One of the great messages that the Book of Mormon has for our day is that prosperity often begets wickedness. Wickedness is a greater tragedy than death, pain, suffering, or any other condition of mortal life. Remaining humble and righteous in the midst of prosperity can be one of the greatest challenges in enduring to the end.

Conclusion

Adviser presentation

Explain that through prayer and righteous living we come close to the Lord so that when difficult experiences arise we will have the strength to face them. We must always be watchful that the prosperity of our day does not cause us to forget our relationship with the Lord and the things in life that really matter.

Challenge

Challenge the young men to set a goal for themselves to live in the celestial kingdom and center their lives on that goal. Challenge them to choose one or more of the points listed earlier in the lesson from Elder Benson's general conference address to help them overcome the problem or conflict that they wrote on their paper.