

LESSON 9

“Seek Ye for the Kingdom of God”

Introduction

When the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob encouraged his people to seek for the kingdom of God (see Jacob 2:18), he did so at a time when the sins of pride, love of riches, and immorality were serious problems. These sins are a threat to

the unity and progress of God’s kingdom on earth. To seek for the kingdom of God is to make living the gospel a top priority in our lives. This lesson will help students commit to forsake sin and more fully seek after God’s kingdom.

Background Reading

- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Pride and the Priesthood,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 55–58.
- “Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods before Me,” chapter 14 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 145–53.
- “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” chapter 1 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 37–45.

Suggestions for Teaching

Alma 7:14–16, 19, 21–24

The Book of Mormon teaches us how to follow the path to God’s kingdom

Ask students to consider things that need to be checked regularly to keep them in good working condition (for example, checking engine oil or smoke detector batteries, or getting a checkup by a doctor or dentist).

- What are the benefits of checking on these regularly? (We can fix problems and avoid trouble or danger in the future.)

Explain that we similarly need to consistently review the condition of our spiritual lives to assess weaknesses and avoid danger.

Tell students that when Alma the Younger was serving as high priest, he visited the people of the Church in Gideon and urged them to evaluate their spiritual condition. Ask students to read Alma 7:19 silently, looking for the spiritual condition of the people in Gideon.

- How did Alma describe the spiritual condition of the people of Gideon? (The people were “in the path which leads to the kingdom of God.”)

Explain that the “kingdom of God” has at least two separate meanings—one earthly and one celestial. Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and help students understand that in Alma 7:19 the “kingdom of God” refers to the celestial kingdom:



“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as it is now constituted is *the kingdom of God on earth*. ... In the eternal worlds, *the celestial kingdom is the kingdom of God*. ... The gospel is designed to prepare men for an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 415–17.)

Ask students to read Alma 7:14–16 and look for what Alma instructed the people they must do to inherit eternal life.

- Why do you think that Alma invited the people to repent when they were already on the path of righteousness? (The people of Gideon needed to stay on the path of righteousness.)

Invite a few students to take turns reading from Alma 7:21–24 aloud. Ask the class to look for actions and attributes that will help us inherit the kingdom of God.

- What do we need to *do* and *be* in order to follow the path leading to the kingdom of God? (Summarize student responses by writing the following principle on the board: **By living the principles of the gospel, we follow the path that leads to the kingdom of God.**)

Invite students to consider how their actions are helping them to become more like Jesus Christ and to progress toward the kingdom of God. Ask them to consider how they feel about the progress they are currently making.

1 Nephi 10:21; 2 Nephi 9:39; Jacob 2:12–14, 20–28; 3:10–12; Mosiah 2:20–25; 4:13, 21–26; 3 Nephi 12:27–30

Love of riches, pride, and immorality keep us from seeking God’s kingdom

Explain that throughout the Book of Mormon, God’s prophets warned the people against sin. For example, Jacob was commanded by the Lord to rebuke his people for sins that were “abominable unto God” (Jacob 2:5).

Write the following references on the board: Jacob 2:12–14, Jacob 2:20–21, and Jacob 2:23–28. Ask students to scan these passages, looking for specific sins that Jacob mentioned. Suggest that students mark words or phrases that describe these sins. After sufficient time, invite students to share the sins Jacob addressed in each passage. Write each sin they identify above the related reference on the board as follows:

<i>Love of riches</i>	<i>Pride</i>	<i>Immorality</i>
<i>Jacob 2:12–14</i>	<i>Jacob 2:20–21</i>	<i>Jacob 2:23–28</i>

Invite a student to read Jacob 3:10–12 aloud, and ask the class to look for words and phrases that Jacob used to illustrate the seriousness of the people’s sins.

- What words or phrases illustrate the seriousness of the people’s sins?
- Jacob used the phrase “the awful consequences” of sin (verse 12). Invite students to cross-reference Jacob 3:12 with 2 Nephi 9:39 and 1 Nephi 10:21. Ask a student to read each of these verses aloud. Ask the class to look for additional consequences of sin. Invite the class to identify a truth from these passages about how sins such as pride, immorality, and the love of riches can affect someone who is seeking the kingdom of God. (Students should identify a truth such as the following: **Sin leads to spiritual death and prevents us from entering God’s kingdom.**)

Add the following scripture references to the board:

<i>Love of riches</i>	<i>Pride</i>	<i>Immorality</i>
<i>Jacob 2:12–14</i>	<i>Jacob 2:20–21</i>	<i>Jacob 2:23–28</i>
<i>Mosiah 4:13, 21–26</i>	<i>Mosiah 2:20–25</i>	<i>3 Nephi 12:27–30</i>

Invite students to select and read one of the new passages. Ask them to look for ways to avoid the sins of love of riches, pride, and immorality. After sufficient time, ask them to share what they found.

- How would following the counsel in these passages help a member of the Church to seek the kingdom of God and to strengthen the Lord’s Church on earth?

Matthew 6:33; Jacob 2:17–19

We should seek for God’s kingdom above all other interests

Explain that in addition to warning his people about the love of riches, pride, and immorality, Jacob gave counsel to help them overcome their unrighteous desires. Ask a student to read Jacob 2:17–19 aloud while the class looks for the counsel that Jacob gave.

- What can we learn from Jacob’s counsel that can help us avoid sin? (Students should identify the following: **God has commanded us to seek for the kingdom of God above all other interests.**)
- What does it mean to you to seek first the kingdom of God?

Display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), and invite a student to read it aloud:



“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 40).

- What are some examples of things that “fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives” when we make God our first priority?
- What is an example of something that has fallen into place or dropped out of your life as you have put Heavenly Father and His kingdom first in your life?
- What effect would putting God first have on us when we are tempted by pride, love of riches, immorality, or other sins?

Invite a student to read Matthew 6:33 aloud. Tell students that the Joseph Smith Translation reads as follows: “*Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 [in Matthew 6:33, footnote a]).

Display the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“‘Seek ... first to build up the kingdom of God’ means to assign first priority to God and to His work. The work of God is to bring to pass the eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39), and all that this entails. ... Everything else is lower in priority. ... As someone has said, if we do not choose the kingdom of God first, it will make little difference in the long run what we have chosen instead of it” (“Focus and Priorities,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 83–84).

- What are some ways a young adult member of the Church can “build up the kingdom of God”?

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“By choosing to be in [God’s] kingdom, we separate—not isolate—ourselves from the world. Our dress will be modest, our thoughts pure, our language clean. The movies and television we watch, the music we listen to, the books, magazines, and newspapers we read will be uplifting. We will choose friends who encourage our eternal goals, and we will treat others with kindness. We will shun the vices of immorality, gambling, tobacco, liquor, and illicit drugs. Our Sunday activities will reflect the commandment of God to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. We will follow the example of Jesus Christ in the way we treat others. We will live to be worthy to enter the house of the Lord” (“The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 8).

- How can seeking God’s kingdom significantly influence every aspect of our lives?
- How has seeking God’s kingdom influenced your life or the life of a family member or acquaintance?

Encourage students to ponder what they might do to continually seek God’s kingdom. Encourage them to listen for the promptings of the Spirit and write down what they plan to do. Testify of the blessings that come from putting God first in our lives.

Student Readings

- Matthew 6:33; Jacob 2:12–28; 3:10–12; Mosiah 2:20–25; 4:13, 21–26; Alma 7:14–16, 19, 21–24; 3 Nephi 12:27–30.
- “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” chapter 1 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 37–45.