

BOOK 1 • SERVANT OF THE VINEYARD TRILOGY

The  
**TRUE GRAFT**  
That it May Bring Forth Good Fruit



**A Witness of the Restoration**  
**What Joseph Smith Learned and Taught**

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Publishing works that prepare the vineyard for the Lord's return.



# The Song of the Vineyard

"You were in the dress rehearsal," He said.

The paramedics had just removed my mother's broken body from the passenger seat. One knelt over me, trying to free my leg from where it was jammed under the gas pedal. Another leaned in behind him and asked my birth date.

"July 6th" I answered.

"That's in two days. Happy birthday!" he said. And right there in the wreck, they began to sing: "Happy birthday to you..."

Then one of them announced, "We're never going to get him out the door. We'll have to take him out the back."

The paramedic at my left tried to lower the seat back, but it was stuck. A moment later another crawled in behind me with a crowbar. With a loud snap the seat gave way, and I fell back as if hit by a jackhammer. Before I could catch my breath, a stretcher board was jammed beneath me. Four sets of hands lifted me out, strapped me in, and fastened a brace around my neck.

And the strangest thing? Every one of those moments had already happened—I knew them seconds before they came. A déjà vu so strong it shook me. In confusion I asked the voice I had been talking with, "How could I know these things?"

And the voice answered, gentle and sure: *"You were in the dress rehearsal."*

Does God care? Does He care about us—about me, about you—or are we merely pawns in some vast cosmic game?

David asked this very thing: *"Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment"* (Psalm 35:23). Fearing he had been cast off, he cried, *"Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?"* (Psalm 44:23). Though he knew God never slumbers (Psalm 121:4), he felt forgotten.

Habakkuk raised the same cry: *"O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!"* (Habakkuk 1:2)

In the New Testament, in a moment of desperation, the disciples cried out to Jesus, *"Master, carest thou not that we perish?"* (Mark 4:38)

We have all asked it: If God is love, why doesn't He love me?

I tell you the story of my accident because it is my witness that He does. God speaks. God answers. God cares.

Look around you, the evidences abound.

In the heavens. The moon is set at just the right distance from the earth—far enough to keep us steady, close enough to govern the tides. If it shifted even a fraction, the earth would wobble and life would unravel. The heavens declare His perfect balance.

In the earth beneath. The soil beneath our feet teems with life. Millions of unseen organisms turn waste into nourishment, cycling death into life again and again. What we throw away, He renews.

In the body. Your stomach holds a living world within it—a microbiome of countless tiny creatures working together so you can digest food. Without them you would bloat and die. Even at the smallest scale, God provides helpers so you can live.

In the sky above. Every sunrise testifies of order. The earth spins with such precision that clocks are set by its rhythm. Morning follows night because His hand sustains the turning.

In the womb. A child forms from a single cell, multiplying, differentiating, and weaving bones, skin, nerves, and a beating heart in silence. *"Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb"* (Psalm 139:13). Each birth is a reminder that God's work continues.

In the storms. Even lightning, terrifying as it is, splits nitrogen in the sky and returns it to the earth in rain, fertilizing the ground for crops to grow. What looks like chaos is provision.

In the stillness. A whisper of peace in the heart when we pray. A scripture verse that meets us at just the right moment. A thought or prompting that saves us from harm. These are not coincidences. They are the voice of a God who cares.

David said it best:

*"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." (Psalm 8:3–5)*

Great and small, the evidences surround us. The heavens, the earth, the body, the storm, the whisper—all testify that God is not silent. He speaks. He answers. He cares.

The pattern continues.

Just as He spoke through the creation, through prophets of old, and through His quiet voice in our lives, He is always involved in our lives.

One of my favorite evidences that God is mindful of us is that He called a servant—Joseph Smith—and spoke to him too. He gave him tools, teachings, parables, and visions to strengthen him for the labor he would be called to do. Among them was the allegory of the vineyard.

### **The Allegory of the Vineyard**

The allegory of a vineyard is one of the Lord's oldest and most consistent ways of teaching about His work and His glory. *"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."* (Moses 1:39)

The Lord of the Vineyard is Jesus Christ. The tree is His work among men. And the servant He directed to labor in these last days was Joseph Smith.

Isaiah described in Isaiah chapter 5 what is called his song of the vineyard: the Lord planted a grape vineyard on a fruitful hill, cleared the stones, built a tower, and made every provision for it to flourish. Yet when He looked for grapes, He found only wild ones (Isaiah 5:1–2).

Zenos, whose words Jacob preserved, gave a long allegory of the master's persistence: the olive vineyard decayed, but he dug, pruned, nourished, and grafted again and again, laboring that it might bring forth good fruit (Jacob 5).

And in modern times, the Lord spoke to Joseph Smith using the same allegory. In his parable, the servants planted trees and built a hedge, but neglected the tower He commanded. While they delayed, the enemy came by night and spoiled the vineyard (D&C 101:43–52).

Three witnesses—Isaiah, Jacob, and Joseph Smith—each in harmony with the same vineyard song. Together they testify of a God who plants, nourishes, and labors, never abandoning His vineyard.

### **The Pattern of the Vineyard**

Have you ever planted a fruit tree, or a garden?

*You tuck the seed into the soil, water it, and watch for the first tender green to break the surface.*

*You wait through the weeks and months, watering, pulling weeds, and fertilizing.*

*You pray the sun and rain will be what is needed; not too much, not too little.*

*You feel joy in seeing a plant you nurtured stretch upward and finally blossom.*

*You wait with great anticipation for the day when fruit begins to swell—when you can taste the harvest.*

But, alas, sometimes there is also heartbreak. Sometimes the fruit withers before it ripens. Sometimes the sun scorches. Sometimes pests destroy what you had hoped for.

Sometimes it grows, but the fruit is not what you expected—hard, sour, tasteless, or worse—bitter.

Every grower knows this grief. All the work, all the hope, all the care—and still the harvest fails.

This is the grief Isaiah described in his song. The Lord Himself had done everything for His Vineyard to thrive. Yet when the fruit came, it was wild and sour.

The Lord's question in that song is the same question every gardener has asked in frustration:

*"What more could have been done?" (Isaiah 5:4)*

Isaiah helps us feel the heart of God—not as a distant judge, but as a patient caretaker whose hopes were dashed by a failed harvest. His grievance was not cold anger. It was the sorrow of a gardener who had

loved, and labored, and looked for sweetness, only to taste bitterness instead.

If Isaiah helps us feel the sorrow of a failed harvest,<sup>1</sup> Zenos helps us see the stubborn love of the gardener who refuses to quit.<sup>2</sup> His allegory, preserved in Jacob's record, stretches across ages.

The master of the vineyard walks again and again among his trees.

*He sees decay.*

*He sees branches withering.*

*He sees wild shoots spreading where he had hoped for fruit.*

But instead of cutting it all down, he goes to work. He digs around the roots. He prunes away what he can. He nourishes with dung. He grafts in new branches and transplants others to different soil.

When the corruption worsens, he pleads:

*"What could I have done more for my vineyard?"* (Jacob 5:41)

The image is not of a farmer who plants once and then gives up. It is of a master who labors tirelessly, season after season, doing everything in his power to preserve life in His vineyard.

Zenos' story is long because love is long. It's unrelenting. It refuses to abandon what it has cared for.

Where Isaiah shows us the Lord's grief, Zenos shows us His persistence. The God of Israel is not only a planter—He is a keeper. His hands stay in the soil, His eyes stay on the branches, His heart stays with the tree.

In Joseph's day, the parable came again.<sup>3</sup>

The Lord compared His church to a vineyard and His Saints to the servants who tend it. He gave simple, clear instructions: plant the trees, set a hedge around them for protection, and build a tower and place a watchman in it to alert others so the enemy could not come by stealth.

It was not busywork. Anyone who has cared for a field knows the value of these important steps.

*A hedge keeps out the wandering animals.*

*A tower lets you see what's coming before it arrives.*

*A watchman can warn the workers below.*

These are the safeguards every good grower builds if he expects to keep his vineyard safe, and enjoy his harvest.

But the servants in Joseph's parable delayed. They reasoned with one another, and said the tower was not needed. They neglected the very commandment that would have secured the vineyard. And while they lingered, the enemy came at night, broke down the hedge, and spoiled the vineyard (D&C 101).

The grief of Isaiah shows us the harvest gone wrong. The persistence of Zenos shows us the gardener who keeps laboring anyway. But the parable given through Joseph shows us something more immediate: love requires vigilance.

The Lord does not only plant and nourish—He commands His servants to watch. If they delay, if they grow complacent, the loss is real.

Yet the loss is never final.

Each story, in its own way, bears witness that the Master of the vineyard does not abandon what He has planted.

His labor continues. His hands remain in the soil. His eye is on the fruit He still desires to see.

### **Joseph's Role: The Servant of the Vineyard**

The vineyard imagery now comes to life in Joseph Smith. Isaiah sang of failed fruit. Zenos told of a master's relentless labor. Joseph did more than echo their words—he lived the allegory.

Through him the graft—the Gospel of Jesus Christ—was tended in flesh and blood: questions asked, prayers offered, answers received, actions taken, and the word written.

When Joseph entered the field, he did not bring tools of his own. He brought only a question.

As a young boy he searched the scriptures and found a promise: *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God"* (James 1:5). He believed it. He acted on it. He went into the grove and prayed.

That first question set the course for all that followed.

### **Prayer—Joseph's Lifelong Orientation**

Joseph learned early that prayer was the soul's lifeline to heaven. At times, he paired it with fasting, for fasting magnifies prayer. It clears distraction, sharpens faith, and opens the heart with greater power—

bringing spiritual clarity, stronger faith, steadier hope, and deeper charity.

Joseph did not discover prayer for the first time when he entered the grove. The habit had been planted much earlier in his home.

His mother, Lucy, poured out vocal prayers and taught her children to look heavenward for answers.<sup>4</sup> His father, Joseph Sr., was a man of vision and knew scripture, whose nightly dreams and biblical language created an atmosphere where heaven felt near.

In their home, prayer was not a formality but the breath of daily life—a family kneeling together, reading aloud from the Bible, and seeking heaven’s help in want and in sickness.

This culture of prayer was Joseph’s soil.

By the time he walked into the woods as a boy of fourteen, he already knew prayer was real. The grove did not plant faith in him; it revealed the fruit of faith already growing.

The spring morning in the grove was not Joseph’s first prayer. It was the living proof of a boy who had already learned to bend his heart and voice toward heaven.

*He prayed because he believed God would answer.  
He entered the trees not to test prayer but to rely on it.*

The grove prayer was a living example of a young man who had faith enough to ask what his heart yearned to know. And when he asked, heaven replied.

His prayer shows us the way: if we follow his example—faith that speaks, heart that bends, body that turns heavenward—we too may receive answers.

In the Book of Mormon, Amulek’s words make prayer tangible:

*"Cry unto him in your houses, both morning, mid-day, and evening"* (Alma 34:17–27). In the house, prayer orders the day. The family kneels together, voices joining, children learning that the first and last word in a home belongs to God. This was Joseph’s upbringing, where scripture was read aloud and his mother’s voice rose heavenward in prayer over her children.

*"Cry unto him in your fields."* Prayer belongs to labor. The plow in the soil or the sweat of the brow is not too common for heaven’s ear. A whispered voice while binding sheaves or felling timber turns work into worship. Joseph’s life as a farm boy, swinging an axe or sowing

seed, was threaded with such cries—petitions for strength, for relief, for understanding.

*"Cry unto him against the power of your enemies."* Prayer arms the soul when no earthly weapon will suffice. It is the cry of protection, the yielding of fear to One who delivers. Joseph prayed in the face of mobs, lawsuits, and betrayal, not merely for safety but for courage and forgiveness.

*"Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them. Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase."* Prayer lays even the most ordinary needs before God. Grain and flocks were not beneath His notice. In Joseph's day, survival itself rested on such petitions—asking the Lord to preserve harvests, to prosper herds, to feed the family through winter.

*"Pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places."* Prayer belongs in solitude, where no eye sees but God's. Joseph sought such places often—the grove being only the most remembered. There he could speak freely, with no one to overhear but heaven. Closet prayer is where the soul lays itself bare.

*"Yea, in your wilderness."* Prayer belongs even in exile and desolation. For Alma's people it meant barren lands and wandering; for Joseph it meant prison cells, lonely flights, and nights under the open sky. Wilderness prayers are cries from the margins, where nothing seems certain but God's nearness.

*"When ye do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually"* (Alma 34:27). Even when lips fall silent, the heart may still bend heavenward. Prayer becomes orientation—walking, speaking, eating, laboring, all with a heart turned toward God.

This sweep of scripture leaves no space untouched: house and field, closet and wilderness, bread and flock, enemy and friend. In every circumstance the soul must cry out.

The cry itself is not chiefly about words, nor about tears, though both may come. It is about posture, intent, humility, and faith. To cry unto God is to bring Him into every place and every condition of life—despair and joy alike, and all the ordinary moments in between.

This is why Joseph prayed.

Prayer was not a duty to be checked, nor a pious display. It was the means by which he bent himself toward heaven and invited heaven's power into every circumstance.

It was how he conquered temptation, how he gained light, and how he heard the Lord.

Joseph's practice of prayer bore the same character as the scriptures he translated.

In private he prayed vocally and particularly, not because God needed words, but because speaking shaped faith and invited heaven's reply. A thought may wander, but a spoken prayer fixes intent. His journals and revelations show him retreating to fields, attics, or woods to pour out his heart, because he knew God not only heard but would answer.

The "why" of his private prayer was orientation—he could not carry the weight of visions, persecution, and responsibility without bending himself daily toward the Lord.

And in his household he taught the same.

His family knelt together, not as a ritual, but because a kneeling family learns to be governed by heaven. A home where children hear their parents speak aloud to heaven becomes a house where heaven abides.

The reason was never form—it was that a family cannot be knit together without the Lord's Spirit.

Joseph taught his people to pray in their houses morning, noon, and night because he knew that no household would prosper if it did not rise and fall on its knees.

Among the Saints he prayed communally.

In congregations he joined his voice with theirs in extemporaneous petitions. He showed that public prayer was not the privilege of leaders alone, but the lifeblood of the whole assembly.

On certain occasions the Lord revealed the very words to be spoken—most notably the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple (D&C 109), where Joseph's voice became a mouthpiece for heaven.

Apart from a few revealed occasions, Joseph prayed without prepared words, trusting the Spirit to give utterance. The "why" of communal prayer was unity—hearts and voices rising together, creating a channel through which revelation could descend upon the body of Saints.

For Joseph, prayer was not confined to the mind, nor reserved for the pulpit. It was a spoken orientation of heart and household, a communal yielding of hearts joined together, and a daily act of dependence upon God.

Joseph's prayers were not only words; they were embodied.

Posture mattered because posture proclaimed what words alone could not. A bowed knee shows humility before God. To fall prostrate portrays utter surrender. To lift hands displays openness, a readiness to receive. In Joseph's day the Saints often combined these gestures—kneeling with uplifted hands—so that body and soul bore the same witness.

And it was more than symbolism.

Posture is testimony. Just as the direction of a person's feet will eventually carry them to that place their feet are pointed, so the posture of the body demonstrates where the heart is turned.

*A bowed knee shows the will yielding.*

*Uplifted hands display the soul reaching.*

*A circle kneeling together demonstrates unity before God.*

In this way the body becomes part of prayer, giving visible evidence to heaven of what the soul intends.

The circles Joseph formed in Kirtland and later in Nauvoo embodied this truth.

Men and women, sometimes clasping hands, sometimes with arms raised, faced inward toward a shared center. In those moments posture became theology: all equal before God, all oriented toward Christ. The Lord answered with visions, manifestations, and knowledge, confirming that prayer was not mental habit alone but embodied communion.

When posture is reduced to folded arms or silent formality, the channel weakens—because of what it displays to God. It portrays closure rather than openness, containment rather than surrender. Joseph's practice reminds us that heaven desires the whole being: heart, voice, body, and will, all turned toward Him.

When prayer is lived in this way—spoken with faith, embodied with intent—it bears fruit.

***Forgiveness flows***, because confession spoken with a bowed heart invites mercy.

***Revelation comes***, because questions uttered aloud with real desire bring heaven's reply.

***Healing follows***, because hands laid in prayer display reliance on God's power rather than human strength.

***Deliverance is granted***, because cries against enemies show trust in the Lord of Hosts.

And ***unity grows***, because families and congregations that kneel together demonstrate before heaven that they will be governed by one Spirit.

These were the fruits of Joseph's life. When he prayed, answers followed: visions opened, comfort descended, direction came.

The Saints who joined him found the same. Their meetings often closed with prayer that filled the room with power; their homes were strengthened by prayer that knit them together in love.

Prayer was never ornamental. It was the instrument by which heaven blessed, guided, and sanctified.

To "pray always" is not to multiply words; it is to let every word come from real desire and from the Spirit who gives it.

*"They did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire." (3 Nephi 19:24)*

The power wasn't in length but in the source of the words.

The Lord taught the early Saints the same principle:

*"If ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done... But know this, it shall be given you what ye shall ask." (D&C 50:29–30)*

True prayer is born when heaven supplies both the yearning and the request; the soul simply bends and speaks them. Prayer, then, is not about saying more; it is about yielding more—seeking words and desires that God Himself gives.

Prayer becomes orientation—the daily habit of bending, speaking, and listening until it reshapes how a person stands in the world.

*A house that begins and ends the day on its knees becomes a dwelling of light.*

*A family that lifts its voice together becomes a household knit by heaven.*

*A congregation that joins in prayer becomes a body that can hear revelation.*

Joseph's life showed this plainly: prayer was not an interruption to his work; it was the way his work was governed.

The prayer he spoke in the grove was not the first but the fullest expression of a habit already alive within him.

His whole life testified that heaven responds to those who cry with faith, speak with intent, and yield their will. When prayer was lived vocally, bodily, and continually, the people were oriented heavenward—and heaven inclined its voice to them, guiding, delivering, and blessing.

This is the hinge on which Joseph's story turns: every revelation he received and every ordinance he set in motion arose from this living orientation of prayer.

The same posture that bent his soul in prayer also ordered the work the Lord gave him to do.

### **How Prayer and Fasting Governed His Ministry**

Again and again, Joseph lived the same sequence:

*He had a question.*

*He prayed—often with fasting.*

*He asked God.*

*God answered.*

*He took action.*

*It was preserved as scripture—the law of the kingdom.*

The Lord also named Joseph's stewardship: prophet, seer, and revelator.

**As a prophet**, he taught from truth he received from the Lord, bringing the Bible and the Book of Mormon into clearer light.

**As a seer**, he uncovered hidden truth through the gift of translation ancient records—the Book of Mormon, the inspired Bible translation.

**As a revelator**, he opened the heavens, receiving commandments and mysteries directly from the Lord for the Saints.

Each role flowed from the same living pattern.

Consider these examples:

#### **The Vision of the Degrees of Glory (D&C 76).<sup>5</sup>**

Joseph and Sidney Rigdon were pondering John 5:29 about the resurrection of the just and the unjust. Their question

became a vision, not creating new law, but revealing the mystery and giving greater understanding of what God had already spoken—and then it was preserved as new scripture, bringing that truth into greater clarity.

**The Law of the Church (D&C 42).<sup>6</sup>**

The Saints in 1831 already knew they must live by the Lord's word. Joseph's prayer was how to order a people striving to be Zion. The revelation did not invent new morality; it gathered and clarified the Lord's requirements, then was preserved as scripture to govern consecration, teaching, healing, and community life.

**The Call to Emma and the Women of the Church (D&C 25).**

Joseph asked concerning his wife Emma. The Lord's answer disclosed the calling already known to Him: "*Thou art an elect lady, whom I have called*" (v. 3). The revelation confirmed and recorded it, becoming a pattern for women's formal labor later realized in the Relief Society.

**The Word of Wisdom (D&C 89).**

The Saints already believed their bodies should be holy. Joseph sought guidance for a school clouded with smoke and excess. The revelation clarified principles and attached promises of hidden treasures of knowledge<sup>7</sup> to obedience. Preserved as scripture, it witnesses that God cares for body and spirit.

**The Olive Leaf (D&C 88).<sup>8</sup>**

Seeking how the Saints should prepare for Zion and the Lord's return, Joseph prayed. The answer unfolded light and law, resurrection and sanctification, and the order of a House of Learning (School of the Prophets). Recorded and preserved, it remains among the richest revelations, giving cosmic scope and practical commandment.

Many examples stand as a witness. Joseph may have begun as a boy searching for light, and the method he used to do so worked.

It was simple: he prayed, he fasted, he asked, the Lord answered, and the word was written.

In every case, the heavens responded to humble questions, and those answers became the Lord's word for His people.

The bottom line: it worked so well Joseph continued in it the rest of his life—and he taught it to us. His ministry was proof that the Lord had planted a graft anew, and that it could yet bear fruit.

### **The Fruit of the Graft**

The grafting process succeeded. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was alive again, scripture was flowing, and the Saints were beginning to taste the fruit.

Joseph's own ministry bore fruit in his communion with heaven. Across thirty-eight years of his life, he met with more than fifty heavenly messengers.<sup>9</sup> Moroni appeared again and again, instructing him for years.<sup>10</sup> And the Savior Himself appeared more than once.<sup>11</sup> For Joseph, the veil was thin. These were not distant legends but living visitations, each confirming that the graft was real and that heaven was near.

Each visitation added strength to the graft, binding ancient roots with living branches.

The work also bore fruit among the Saints themselves:

**Scripture multiplied.** The Book of Mormon was published.<sup>12</sup> The Doctrine and Covenants grew,<sup>13</sup> line upon line, revelation upon revelation. The Pearl of Great Price gathered prophetic visions into one place.<sup>14</sup> Joseph's inspired revision of the Bible (JST)<sup>15</sup> opened passages with new light and clarity. What had been a silence of centuries broke open into a flood of scripture.

**A Temple arose.** In Kirtland, a house of the Lord was built and dedicated.<sup>16</sup> Angels were seen. Visions were given. In Doctrine and Covenants 88, the Lord declared that nine men had their calling and election made sure.<sup>17</sup> It was a glorious time.

**Cities flourished.** Kirtland became a thriving community of Saints. And later, a swamp on the Mississippi became Nauvoo,<sup>18</sup> a beautiful city<sup>19</sup> with schools, shops, farms, and commerce. The Saints built not just structures, but society—working together, consecrating their labor, and lifting one another.

**The gifts of the Spirit operated.**<sup>20</sup> Healings, tongues, prophecy, visions, discernment—signs that God was among His people were not only claimed, they were experienced.

**The gospel went abroad.**<sup>21</sup> Missionaries left family and home to carry the message across the United States, into Canada, to Great Britain, and even to the Native Americans, fulfilling the promises of the Book of Mormon.

These are not small things. They are proof that the graft was thriving in the Lord's Vineyard, that His Servant was accomplishing the errand, and that the fruit of the harvest was sweet. They show the graft alive, rooted, and bearing fruit.

## The Opposition to the Graft

Every vineyard faces storms. Every planting meets resistance. That is why the Lord in His parables commands hedges, towers, and watchmen. For where the Lord labors, the adversary presses in.

The graft Joseph planted bore fruit, but it also drew fire. From the beginning, the Saints learned that the vineyard would not thrive without opposition.

**Kirtland.** The temple in Kirtland was built with sacrifice.<sup>22</sup> Farmers sold land to fund construction; families offered what little they had. Men labored through the nights, and women organized meals, sewing, and song to strengthen weary hands. Angels were seen there,<sup>23</sup> and visions unfolded. But almost as soon as it was dedicated, storms arose.

Speculation and financial schemes entangled the Saints. The collapse of the Kirtland Safety Society ruined many<sup>24</sup>, and bitter division spread. Apostasy followed. Within a few short years, the temple that had cost so much was lost to debt,<sup>25</sup> and soon the very Saints who built it were driven from their homes.

**Missouri.** Violence in Missouri was sharp and unrelenting. Neighbors feared the Saints' rapid growth, their unity, and their bold claims of revelation. Old prejudices flared into hatred. Mobs burned homes and fields, destroyed printing presses, and forced families into the cold with nothing.<sup>26</sup>

At Haun's Mill, men, women, and children were massacred.<sup>27</sup> Governor Boggs issued the infamous extermination order, declaring the Saints must be "*exterminated or driven from the state.*"<sup>28</sup> Thousands fled in terror, leaving behind farms, graves, and the labor of years.

**Nauvoo.** Out of a swamp on the Mississippi the Saints built a city that flourished with commerce, culture, and industry.<sup>29</sup> But as it grew, suspicion and political resentment grew with it. Accusations and slanders filled the newspapers. Lawsuits and threats pressed Joseph constantly.<sup>30</sup> Betrayals from within compounded pressure from without.<sup>31</sup> By the 1840s, Nauvoo was both a marvel and a powder keg—a city of hope and unity, but also a target for mobs and militias who circled it with envy and fear.

Things were not perfect. The Saints endured hardship upon hardship. But this was the reality of the vineyard: fruit and storms, growth and opposition, triumph and tragedy woven together.

The parables had already warned of it: wild grapes, corrupt branches, towers neglected, enemies breaking in by night. The Saints in Joseph's day lived those parables in flesh and blood.

### **The Servant in the Vineyard**

Joseph himself embodied both realities. Through his labor the vineyard flourished; through his suffering it endured its fiercest storms. The revelations, the temple, the scriptures, the gifts, the missions—all of it came through his labor.

The same life that produced abundance was relentlessly attacked.

He was ridiculed in the press, betrayed by friends, and hounded by lawsuits. He was dragged into court more than once, often on false charges. He was beaten, tarred and feathered,<sup>32</sup> and narrowly escaped assassination attempts.

In Missouri he shared the Saints' chains,<sup>33</sup> imprisoned in Liberty Jail. And in Nauvoo he faced constant suspicion, accusation, and unrest.<sup>34</sup>

Still he labored. He preached, he organized, he built, he translated, he dictated revelation. He poured out his strength until his life itself became the offering.

The vineyard allegories always pointed to such a servant: one who would plant, nourish, and prune, but also suffer for the sake of the graft.

Joseph's life was that pattern. He bore fruit in abundance, and experienced opposition in equal measure.

### **The Burden of a Stiff-Necked People**

One of Joseph's greatest challenges was the burden of a stiff-necked people.

This is one of the oldest patterns in scripture. From the beginning, those called of God have labored not only against outside opposition, but against resistance from their own people.

**In the Bible**, Moses cried out: *"Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you"* (Deuteronomy 9:24). Isaiah declared: *"This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord"* (Isaiah 30:9). Stephen, in the New Testament, bore the same witness: *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye"* (Acts 7:51).

**In the Book of Mormon**, Nephi grieved: *"They will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness"* (2 Nephi 32:7). Jacob lamented: *"Ye are a stiffnecked people ... hearts are set so much upon the things of this world"* (Jacob 2:13). Mosiah warned that when the people forgot their God, *"their hearts were set upon riches ... and they began to persecute those that did prophesy"* (Mosiah 11:14–15). Mormon summarized generations of the same cycle: *"How slow to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsel ... because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle, and there had been slain many of their brethren"* (Helaman 4:21–23).

From Bible to Book of Mormon, the pattern is plain: when the Lord sends truth, many rejoice—but many resist. Prophets labor, but their own people are often their greatest grief.

So it was with Joseph.

The storms he faced did not come only from mobs and militias. Again and again, his greatest struggle was with his own people

The Saints who gathered to hear the word were often the first to resist it.

Joseph lamented:

*"I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all." (HC 6:183)*

At another time he confessed: *"If you brethren knew what I know, you would seek to take my life"* (HC 6:317). He bore knowledge too heavy for a people not yet willing to receive it.

The Lord Himself condemned the Church for neglecting the very scripture He had given them:

*"Your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation." (D&C 84:54–55)*

And the calls to repentance were not only to the body of the Church. Revelation after revelation corrected individual Saints—and Joseph himself.

The Lord rebuked entire councils:

*"Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. ... Their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven." (D&C 121:34–36)*

He warned leaders in Kirtland:

*"Ye have sinned against me a very grievous sin, in that ye have not considered the great commandment in all things." (D&C 95:3)*

Even still in Nauvoo He cautioned:

*"If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants ... they shall not be moved out of their place. But if they will not hearken ... they shall be moved out of their place." (D&C 124:45)*

Joseph himself always stood under the Lord's correcting hand. To the young prophet the Lord commanded, "*Say nothing but repentance unto this generation*" (D&C 11:9).

Why? Because "*all flesh is corrupted before me*" (D&C 38:11). Even Joseph himself heard the rebuke: "*Behold, thou hast not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked before the Lord*" (D&C 93:47).

Even the loss of the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon drew a sharp chastening:

*"You should not have feared man more than God. ... You have lost your gift."* (D&C 3:7–14)

Repeatedly, the Lord reminded Joseph that receiving revelation did not excuse him from obedience. His calling did not place him above correction; it bound him more tightly to accountability.

The Lord's Vineyard has always been tended with both nourishment and pruning. Comfort and correction came side by side. The same voice that opened heaven also cut down pride, exposed sin, and commanded repentance.

The Lord explained it this way: "*I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them ... in consequence of their transgressions*" (D&C 101:2).

Why? Because, "*there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances*" (vs. 6).

But the Lord's promise was sure: "*They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels*" (vs. 3).

And to shape those jewels, "*They must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham*" (vs. 4), for "*all those who will not endure chastening ... cannot be sanctified*" (vs. 5).

*"They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble"* (vs. 7).

Why would the Lord allow such chastening? Because, "*In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me*" (vs. 8).

They were "*set to be a light unto the world, and... saviors of men*" (D&C 103:9), but to do that the Lord knew He had to chasten His

people "until they learn obedience... by the things which they suffer" (D&C 105:6).

**Jewels** are not made in ease; they are cut, polished, and refined in fire.

**Branches** are not made fruitful in ease; they are dug about, pruned, and nourished in patience.

These are two metaphors saying the same thing. And, so it was with the Saints. In good times they treated lightly the things of God; in tribulation they cried out for Him. And in both, the Lord labored still—unwilling to abandon His Vineyard.

### Joseph's Life Cut Short

And then, in June of 1844, the vineyard lost its Servant.

Joseph and Hyrum were taken to Carthage Jail under false charges. That evening, a small band of armed men broke into the jail while a mob surrounded the building. Gunfire erupted at the top of the stairs. In the chaos, both brothers were shot and killed in cold blood.<sup>35</sup>

Together the two brothers sealed their testimony with their blood.<sup>36</sup> Joseph was only thirty-eight years old; Hyrum, forty-four.

The men who had prayed together, labored together, and carried the burden of the Restoration together now fell side by side.

Their deaths silenced their voices, but not their work. The graft they tended remained.

*The scriptures they brought forth.*

*The revelations they received.*

*The pattern they lived.*

All these stand as witness that God had planted His true graft anew.

In the spring of 1844, Joseph moved with increasing urgency—organizing, teaching, preparing the Saints for what was to come. He knew the price of restoration would be high. His death did not end the work; it confirmed it. The blood he shed stood as heaven's witness that the true graft had been restored.

Joseph's and Hyrum's deaths were a tragedy, but not the end of their labor. Their voices still speak from the dust. Their example still shows us how to walk with God: to seek, to ask, to receive, and to live by the word of the Lord.

*"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. ... He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated." (D&C 135:3)*

## **Invitation to Live the Pattern**

The story of the vineyard is not only about hillsides in Isaiah's day, olive trees in Zenos' vision, or towers in Joseph's revelations. It is about the Lord's work and His glory—His care, His labor, His expectation of fruit.

The pattern is about the Lord of the Vineyard's persistence with a people who often fail Him, and His love that refuses to abandon His Vineyard.

In our day, Joseph Smith was the servant sent into the vineyard.

He prayed, he asked, he received, he acted—and the heavens were opened.

Through him the graft was set, scripture was multiplied, and the tree began to bear fruit once again. His life was cut short, and though the graft he planted did not reach its full potential, the Lord of the vineyard keeps watch over His vineyard.

This book is not about everything that followed. It is about what Joseph learned from the Lord, and what he taught to those who would hear.

His pattern was simple, but powerful: seek God, ask in faith, receive by revelation, and live what is given. That pattern is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the graft. It worked for Joseph. It can work for us.

The invitation is plain: let us learn what Joseph learned, and live what he lived. For the same God who answered him will answer us.

Come back to the vineyard. Taste again the fruit of the graft. Learn the pattern, and live it.

## Chapter 1 Notes

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- 1 Isaiah 5:1–7  
This section explicitly lays out the parable of the vineyard, the failed harvest, and the Lord's grief at bringing forth "*wild grapes*."
- 2 Jacob 5 (esp. vv. 11–77)
- 3 D&C 101:43–62
- 4 History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, chap. 1–2
- 5 D&C 76:16–19
- 6 Consecration: vv. 30–39  
Teaching: vv. 12–13  
Healing: vv. 43–48  
Community law: vv. 11, 22–29
- 7 D&C 89:19
- 8 Resurrection & sanctification vv. 14–35, 85–98,  
School of the Prophets / House of Learning vv. 117–137
- 9 Richard Anderson's Joseph Smith's Testimony of the First Vision
- 10 Joseph Smith—History 1:29–54 (first visits, 1823–1827).  
Later angelic instructions noted in History of the Church, esp. Vol. 1.
- 11 First Vision: Joseph Smith—History 1:15–20. 1832  
Vision of the Degrees of Glory: D&C 76:20–24.
- 12 2 Nephi 29:11–13
- 13 D&C 1:38
- 14 Historical compilation (1851, Franklin D. Richards)
- 15 D&C 45:60–61
- 16 D&C 109 (dedicatory prayer)
- 17 D&C 88:3–5 (promise of comforter; "*seal upon you to prepare you*").

- 18 Historical anchor: History of the Church 4:187 (arrival at Commerce/Nauvoo, 1839).
- 19 D&C 124:1–3, 60
- 20 D&C 46:8–26
- 21 D&C 1:30 (Church called to spread abroad). D&C 112:21 (keys given to Twelve for nations). Historical fulfillment: History of the Church 2:489–492 (1837 mission to England).
- 22 History of the Church 2:427–428 (accounts of women donating glass, china, labor).
- 23 *"We... saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold... and his eyes were as a flame of fire."*  
— Joseph Smith Journal, 1 April 1836, in Dean C. Jessee, Papers of Joseph Smith, Vol. 2, p. 427.  
*"Great manifestations of the power of God were seen and felt, and angels administered unto many."* (History of the Church 2:432)
- 24 History of the Church 2:471–482 (Kirtland Safety Society failure, 1837).
- 25 History of the Church 3:2–3 (creditors seized temple).
- 26 History of the Church 3:175–209.
- 27 History of the Church 3:183–190; also Joseph Young's affidavit (Nov. 1838).
- 28 Governor Lilburn Boggs, Oct. 27, 1838. Official Missouri Executive Order 44 (*"must be exterminated or driven from the state"*).
- 29 History of the Church 4:187 (arrival at Commerce/Nauvoo, 1839).
- 30 History of the Church 5:280–282 (arrests, slanders, political attacks in 1842).
- 31 William Law, dissenters' Nauvoo Expositor (June 1844). History of the Church 6:408–412.
- 32 *"I was dragged out of bed by an armed mob, my body naked, and then tarred and feathered."* (History of the Church 1:261–262)

(March 24, 1832, Hiram, Ohio).

Painesville Telegraph, March 1832, reported the incident.

33 D&C 121–122

34 HC 6:408–412 (Nauvoo Expositor + unrest).

35 *"Account of the Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith,"*  
Warsaw Signal, July 3, 1844; see also Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin  
S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,  
1975), 66–74; Illinois State Journal reports, July 1844.

36 D&C 135:3—*"Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith, the  
Patriarch... did seal their testimony with their blood."*



# Thank You for Walking the Vineyard and for Reading Chapter One

Thank you for taking the time to read the opening chapter of The True Graft.

Chapter One was written to set the soil, introduce the pattern of the vineyard, and invite reflection on what the Lord planted through Joseph Smith. These teachings were never meant to be rushed, but walked patiently and tested by their fruit.

The chapters that follow continue this same careful walk—returning again and again to what the Lord taught, how it was lived, and why it mattered. Nothing more is asked of the reader than reflection, honesty, and a willingness to see what grows.

***If you would like to continue walking  
the vineyard, you may do so here:***



**Continue the walk at [servantofthevineyard.com](http://servantofthevineyard.com)**

Wherever your reading leads you next, may the fruit you seek be good, and the walk unhurried.