

Student Teacher 1: The Saints transform Commerce, Illinois, into Nauvoo—a place of beauty

Write the following question on the board: *What are some circumstances in your life right now that are difficult or unpleasant?* Give students time to ponder this question.

Invite students to look for insights about how they can deal with difficult or unpleasant circumstances as they learn about the Saints who established Nauvoo.

Explain that Church members changed the name of a small settlement called Commerce to Nauvoo, which is a Hebrew word that means beautiful.

Invite a student to read the following description of the area as it was when the Saints first arrived in 1839. Ask the class to listen and ponder what their reaction to the area would have been.

When the Saints arrived at the place they would call Nauvoo, much of the land was a swamp infested with mosquitos. The mosquitos carried a disease called malaria, which caused severe fevers and chills and could result in death. Many of the Saints were infected and became ill. Some of the afflicted were so sick that they could only crawl around as they tried to help each other, and some died. (See *Church History in the Fulness of Times Student Manual*, 2nd ed. [Church Educational System manual, 2003], 217–18.)

- Would you have called this a beautiful place? Why do you think the Prophet Joseph Smith chose to call this swampland a beautiful place?

Invite a student to read the following paragraphs explaining how the Saints responded to the challenges they encountered in what was to be their new home.

Joseph Smith also contracted malaria, but after several days of sickness, he arose on July 22, 1839, and was filled with the Spirit of God. He blessed many of the sick near his home. In one instance, Joseph approached a tent belonging to a Church member named Henry G. Sherwood, who was near death. When the Prophet commanded him to rise and come out of the tent, Brother Sherwood obeyed and was healed.

Joseph crossed to the Iowa side of the river and continued to bless the sick. As Joseph was preparing to return to the Illinois side, a man who was not a member of the Church asked the Prophet if he would come bless his twin

babies about two miles away. “Joseph said he could not go, but he gave Wilford Woodruff a [red silk handkerchief](#) and told him to administer to them, promising that when he wiped their faces with it they would be healed” (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 219). Wilford followed this instruction, and the children were healed. Wilford called that day “a day of God’s power” (Wilford Woodruff Journals, July 22, 1839, quoted in *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 218).

Despite the faith and power of that day, sickness continued among the Saints for the next several months. However, they continued to care for one another and worked to build their new home. They dug [ditches to drain water](#) from the swamps to the river, which made the land more usable and reduced the mosquito problem. Eventually they built many [homes](#) and [other structures](#), including the [Nauvoo Temple](#), which was considered by some to be one of the finest buildings in the country.

- How does the “day of God’s power” on July 22, 1839, help you have greater faith in the Lord?
- How did the Saints make Nauvoo a beautiful place?
- What can we learn from their example?

After students have discussed the Saints’ example of hard work to build Nauvoo, ask the following question:

- What can happen when we seek to improve the circumstances around us?

As students respond, write the following principle on the board: **As we seek to improve the circumstances around us, we also improve ourselves.** Invite students to share experiences that illustrate this principle. You may also want to share an experience and testify of this principle. Invite the class to look for opportunities today to improve the circumstances around them.