
GENERAL HANDBOOK OF INSTRUCTIONS

The *General Handbook of Instructions* is the official book of instruction for Church leaders, mainly STAKE PRESIDENTS and BISHOPS. Church leaders who receive the handbook include GENERAL AUTHORITIES, Church department heads, general auxiliary presidencies, temple presidents, and officers in stakes, wards, missions, districts, and branches. It is a handbook of Church policy and practices, not doctrine. The FIRST PRESIDENCY and QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES prepare the handbook to provide uniform procedures and methods for local leaders as they minister to the members and direct Church affairs in their areas throughout the world. Other Church handbooks, such as those for PRIESTHOOD and AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS, are based on the *General Handbook of Instructions*.

Handbooks have included such things as instruction on (1) Church administration and meetings; (2) calling members to Church positions and releasing them from such calls; (3) ordaining members to priesthood offices; (4) performing ORDINANCES and giving BLESSINGS; (5) doing sacred temple work, and family history; (6) responding to calls for missionary service; (7) keeping records, reports, and accounting for finances; (8) applying Church discipline; and (9) implementing Church policies on such matters as buildings and property, moral issues, and medical and health issues.

The first edition of the handbook was a fourteen-page booklet of shirt-pocket size published in 1899. It instructed stake and ward leaders in how to receive, process, and account for members' tithing, most of which was farm produce and livestock rather than money. The Church revised the handbook annually until 1910 and, thereafter, about every five years. The most significant and constant change that has prompted the revisions has been the growth of the Church from 271,681 members in 1899 to more than 7 million in 1990. Other factors that have prompted revisions include the shift in North American members from an agrarian to an urban society, the immigration of converts, the Depression of the 1930s, the wars in the twentieth century, the increase of sensitive social issues, and the transitions from a membership centered in Utah to a membership in North America, and ultimately, to an international Church. Between revisions, letters from the First Presidency to local

leaders and items in the priesthood *Bulletin* update instructions in the handbook.

The handbook is written in terms of principles, as far as possible, rather than explicit directions. Local leaders apply the principles in their stakes, wards, and branches as they are directed by spiritual inspiration.

The *General Handbook of Instructions* is pre-eminent among Church publications in both its preparation and its use as an authoritative guide for local Church leaders.

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GENTILES

[In the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek words translated into English as "Gentile" signified other peoples; i.e., "not Israelite" and later "not Jewish." For Latter-day Saints, "Gentile" generally means "not Latter-day Saint," although the meaning also extends to include "not Jewish" and "not Lamanite." These latter senses are rooted partly in scripture, where the distinction between Gentiles and Israelites or Jews is firmly maintained, and partly in the language adopted by early leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the LDS scriptural view, Gentiles play an important role in the restoration of the gospel in the latter days (1 Ne. 13:38–39; 22:6–11; 3 Ne. 21:1–6) and in the latter-day work of gathering Israel (1 Ne. 22:12; 3 Ne. 21:6, 22–29). For discussions related to this topic, see Abrahamic Covenant; Gentiles, Fulness of; Israel: Gathering of Israel; and Law of Adoption.]

GENTILES, FULNESS OF

The "fulness of the Gentiles" is a term for a doctrine taught in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. It refers to a process whereby, after Jesus' ministry among his Jewish countrymen, the gospel was preached to Gentiles in the MERIDIAN OF TIME. Jesus told his Jewish listeners that the kingdom of God would be taken from them "and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). He also said that many Gentiles would sit down in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 8:5–12). Paul taught that in his day the Gentiles would be given an opportunity to receive the gospel, be adopted into the house of Israel, and receive the blessings of the covenant

people (Rom. 9–11), concluding that “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25).

Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the people of Judah among all nations “until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24; JST Luke 21:24, 32). As latter-day revelation makes clear, “the times” of the Gentiles refers to the time when the fulness of the gospel will come among them (D&C 45:24–28). Latter-day revelation further teaches that in the last days the restored gospel will “go forth unto the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first, and then, behold, and lo, they shall turn unto the Jews” (D&C 90:9–11), so “that all who will hear may hear” (D&C 1:11) and “all the families of the earth be blessed” (Abr. 2:11). When the Gentiles reject the gospel, “the times of the Gentiles [will] be fulfilled” (D&C 45:29–30).

In 1823 the angel Moroni told Joseph Smith “that the fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in” (JS—H 1:41). During the ministry of the resurrected Jesus among Book of Mormon peoples, he foretold the coming forth of the restored gospel among the Gentiles and warned that when they reject the fulness of his gospel and are lifted up in pride and all manner of wickedness, he will take his gospel from among them (3 Ne. 16:7–10). After they reject the gospel, it will be offered to the house of Israel (3 Ne. 16:11–12). Thus, Gentiles who have accepted the gospel will be numbered with Israel and escape the judgments that are to come upon the wicked (3 Ne. 16:13–14). In the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Gentiles will have been first to receive the gospel, and the first (Israel) will be the last (cf. 1 Ne. 13:42; *MD*, pp. 721–22).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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GETHSEMANE

The name Gethsemane (derived from Hebrew “oil press”) is mentioned twice in the Bible, both in the New Testament (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32); in each case, it is called a “place” (Greek *chōrion*, “piece of land”) to which Jesus Christ and his apostles re-

tired after their last supper together. The fourth gospel calls the area “a garden” (John 18:1). For Latter-day Saints, Gethsemane was the scene of Jesus’ greatest agony, even surpassing that which he suffered on the cross, an understanding supported by Mark’s description of Jesus’ experience (Mark 14:33–39).

According to Luke 22:43–44, Jesus’ anguish was so deep that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground,” an observation that harmonizes with the view that Jesus suffered most in Gethsemane during his ATONEMENT. Even though these verses are missing in some of the earliest extant manuscripts of Luke’s gospel, their content is confirmed in modern revelation (e.g., D&C 19:18). The evidence for Jesus’ extreme agony in Gethsemane is buttressed by a prophecy in the Book of Mormon and a statement by the resurrected Savior recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. About 125 B.C., a Book of Mormon king, BENJAMIN, recounted in an important address a prophecy of the coming MESSIAH spoken to him by an angel during the previous night. Concerning the Messiah’s mortal experience, the angel declared that “he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mosiah 3:7). The Doctrine and Covenants gives the following poignant words of the resurrected Jesus: “Behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; . . . which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:16, 18).

Modern LDS leaders have emphasized that Jesus’ most challenging experience came in Gethsemane. Speaking in a general conference of the Church in 1982, Marion G. Romney, a member of the FIRST PRESIDENCY, observed that Jesus suffered “the pains of all men, which he did, principally, in Gethsemane, the scene of his great agony” (*Ensign* 12 [May 1982]:6). Church President Ezra Taft BENSON wrote that “it was in Gethsemane that Jesus took on Himself the sins of the world, in Gethsemane that His pain was equivalent to the cumulative burden of all men, in Gethsemane that He descended below all things so that all could repent and come to Him” (Benson, p. 7).