

## Joseph Knight Family Connections to the 2025 Come Follow Me Lessons

### Doctrine and Covenants 115-120

## Pushed Out of Clay County, the account from Newel's Journal

Newel Knight wrote in his journal on June 1, 1836

“ All well. The inhabitants of Clay County begin to be hostile, they are holding meetings to expel the Mormons from the county. There is no prospect at present of our former wrongs being redressed by the government which gives our enemies boldness to still persecute, drive and plunder us at will.”

On June 15, 1836 he wrote:

“Lydia has the fever and ague and for about a week I have felt quite unwell, some ague seems to be lurking in my system.

Rumors are afloat that the inhabitants of Clay do not intend to let the Saints remain in the county. The brethren are trying to make a treaty with them , so as to give us the opportunity of leaving without suffering as we did when being expelled from Jackson County.

But few days have passed since writing the above, Lydia's health is no better and I have had some severe shakes of the ague.

The public mind is being agitated and there is every prospect of trouble. False rumors are diligently circulated against us and some of the worst of the citizens seem determined to reenact the Jackson County scenes.

When the Saints were driven from Jackson County, the people of Clay County kindly permitted us an asylum in their midst and many individual acts of kindness might be recorded in their favor, but the more turbulent spirits among them began to stir up anger against us and the smoldering embers of persecution began to show signs of blazing forth again.<sup>1</sup>

Newel recorded that on June 29, 1836 a public meeting was held in Liberty, Missouri, where a citizen group reported their complaints against the members of the church. He included a full copy of the lengthy report.

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<sup>1</sup> Newel Knight Journal, Allen Typescript, p. 55.

The report noted that in November 1833 when people were expelled from their homes in Jackson County, “they came to our county friendless and penniless (seeking as they said) but a temporary asylum.” It went on to explain that almost three years later, time was up and they needed to move on. The report advised the Saints look to explore the territory of Wisconsin. The report outlined the ways in which the Saints were not good neighbors for them:

1. Their religious tenets were so different from present churches they weren’t good neighbors. They advised in “kindness” that for their own good they should find a place where they could be on their own.
2. Their manners, customs and dialects were different from their own.
3. They are non-slave holders and opposed to slavery
4. They declare Indians to be part of God’s chosen people, destined by heaven to inherit this land.
5. There has been rapid emigration and large land purchases.
6. A large number make it clear they want Clay County to be their permanent home.

The Missouri citizen group acknowledged they had no constitutional right to force them out, but the church members should be able to foresee there will be trouble, and that Clay County people will fight in self-defense. They needed to leave for their own safety because a war was inevitable.<sup>2</sup>

Newel wrote on June 30, 1836:

“Intelligence arrived that the brethren would hold council to-morrow to devise some plan for a present salvation and they requested that I should attend, notwithstanding I have had a severe shake of the ague I have made up my mind to go to the council. I have no horse so I shall be obliged to walk. The distance is about 12 miles.<sup>3</sup>

He continued with this statement on July 1<sup>st</sup>:

After committing myself and family to the care of our Heavenly Father I started and arrived at the council in time. The Lord blessed the meeting and light and intelligence seems to be given to our brethren as our day demands. The meeting was largely attended. W. W. Phelps was called to the chair, and John Corrill as secretary. . .

A group of 12 men were appointed to respond to the words of the Missouri Citizen report in Liberty.<sup>4</sup>

Newel’s journal contains the lengthy back and forth responses from Church leaders to community leaders. In mid-July, Newel wrote that,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

“The brethren are moving into Caldwell County and commencing improvements, sowing buckwheat, turnips and fall wheat, building houses, etc. They work with a right good will as there is now a prospect of living for a time in peace and of making some permanent homes.”<sup>5</sup>

Newel wrote on August 1, 1836:

“I began to make preparations for going to Caldwell as that was decided upon as the future home of the Saints. At that time I was owing James Prindle a few dollars. He said if I attempted to go until I had paid him, he would attach [attach?] and take my goods from me on the road. I tried to reason with him, telling him that I would pay him as soon as I could, that my family were sick and in an unhealthy place and I hoped that moving To a better place would be an advantage to them in their health, but all to no purpose, he persisted saying a man who could wear broadcloth should pay his debts.

My mill was in an unfinished state, so that I could not sell it for anything near its worth. So I was obliged to stay and do the best I could and continue my labor on the mill, but I was hindered much by the sickness of my family.”<sup>6</sup>

Things did not improve for Newel. In September his aged Aunt Esther who was living with them took sick, as did his son Samuel, and Lydia was still not well.

In October his aunt passed away and Lydia and Samuel were still sick. A man offered to buy Newel’s mill, but he was required to finish the mill first and would be paid “a trifling sum,” out of which Newel would have to hire labor to finish it.

On December first, Lydia gave birth to a daughter, and Newel reported “she mended slowly” and the mill was still not finished. In February Lydia fell ill again. Newel wrote he left his wife’s bedside and retired to a private grove.

“I told my Heavenly Father all my grief, and made my request known for I had resolved in my heart to call upon God and take no denial. I had buried one companion in that place and felt I could not endure burying another. Besides, I felt that she was worthy and might yet do much good on the earth, and that I might claim her life at the hand of God and not offend. I watered the ground with tears of supplication and continued to call upon God until I received at testimony that she should recover. When I returned to the house I soon saw she had begun to mend.”<sup>7</sup>

Newel continued to be weighed down with debt incurred due to continued illness. They were destitute and he resolved the only way out was to finish the mill. Newel’s brother Joseph had

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

been working on the mill for no pay, and to settle the debt with his brother Newel gave him the only substantial thing he had, a house in Far West.

A man in Clay County hired Newel to build another mill which kept him from moving but helped him financially.

A year and a half after Newel had first planned to move to Far West, he and Lydia finally made it. They arrived February 26, 1838 and Newel bought 80 acres of land. Three months later they were settled into their new home and Lydia was expecting another child.

Newel wrote in his journal:

“The printing press and apparatus were brought from Kirtland and preparations soon made for the commencing of business.

April 15<sup>th</sup> Brother B. Young came to my house before sunrise and said he knew of no other house that would suit so well for the printing press, and it if would suit me, he would glad to have me accommodate them with it. I told him he should have it, and immediately moved out and commenced to build another.

April 25 – My house is up and covered in, and we moved into it.

April 29<sup>th</sup> – My wife gave birth to a son. I now had to get my garden ready, and do all I could to make my family comfortable for I had engaged to build another mill in Clay County.<sup>8</sup>

It was a long hard journey for Newel and Lydia to get a home in Far West. I wonder at the conversation between Newel and Lydia on April 15<sup>th</sup>.

“Good morning, dear. Hope your had a good rest, because a bit ago Brother Brigham dropped to ask for our house to put the church printing press in. I told him it was fine. They need our place now, so I guess we need to start packing up right. I’m sure I can get another house build before the baby comes.”

They did have a roof over their heads when baby James Philander Knight was born, and when Newel left a month after the baby was born, he did hire a brother-in-law to help feed the cattle and such. Lydia and Newel would have their home in Far West for less than a year before they were pushed out again.

Diane Mangum - September 2025

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 56