



## PROFILES IN COURAGE

### Teacher's Guide

# ALEXANDER DONIPHAN

#### CREDITS:

Starring Peter Lawford, Michael Constantine, Tim O'Conner, James Callahan, Paul Stevens, Robert Emhardt, and Simon Oakland. Written by Don M. Mankiewicz. Directed by Paul Stanley. Produced by Gordon Oliver and Robert Saudek Associates. Inspired by John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning book. **50 minutes.** Guide prepared for Social Studies School Service by Robert D. Barnes, 1983.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the meaning of freedom of conscience.
- To examine the concept of civilian control of the military.
- To discuss the obligation to obey orders.
- To understand the meaning of moral courage.

#### BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS:

The early history of the Mormon Church, from its founding by Joseph Smith in Western New York in 1830 to his death at the hands of a mob in Illinois in 1844, is a story of persecution, violence, and flight.

Leaving New York, Smith and his followers settled in Ohio, then Missouri, and later in Illinois. Mormons believed in a centralized form of economic and social life which clashed with the individuality of the times. In addition, their concern for Indians and blacks caused resentment from their neighbors. After the death of Smith, Brigham Young led a small group of followers to the Great Salt Lake Valley. By 1850, 11,000 believers had joined him. Today the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, generally known as the Mormon Church, has close to 4 million members.

Our episode of *Profiles in Courage* takes place in Missouri in 1838. Caldwell County has been created by the Missouri Legislature as a Mormon sanctuary.

Here Mormons dominate in number and live in relative peace, but Mormons in neighboring counties are not as fortunate.

When a small group of Mormons attempt to vote in Daviess County, they are stopped by the Justice of the Peace. A nasty incident is prevented by the intervention of Alexander Doniphan and General Lucas, sent by Governor Boggs to keep order. Lucas's defense of the Mormons is reluctant. He views them as a menace, and the slightest provocation from them will encourage a military response from him. Doniphan, an attorney, former member of the legislature, and confidant to the governor, has championed the Mormon cause and defended the rights of Mormons in court. It is his devotion to the law and to a spirit of fair play, not a belief in the Mormon Church, that motivates him.

When Smith and a few followers roust the Daviess County Justice from his home in the middle of the night and extract a written, signed promise not to further interfere with Mormons, they are arrested and charged with assault. Lucas devises a plan to contain and provoke the Mormons. Doniphan is called to active duty as a brigadier general under the command of Lucas. His relationship with Smith must now be that of adversary.

Colonel Bogart, ordered by Lucas to recruit Missouri citizens into the militia for the campaign against the Mormons, challenges his recruits: "men, this is your chance to say whether this state belongs to us or to the Mormons."

In a skirmish with the Mormons, a citizen "officer" is killed. Lucas urges the governor to take action. Governor Boggs has no further patience with the troublesome Mormons: "The Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the state..."

While under a flag of truce, Smith and four Mormon leaders are captured by Lucas. Charged with treason, they are tried in absentia and sentenced to death. General Lucas orders General Doniphan to take the Mormon leaders to the public square and shoot them. Alexander Doniphan makes the choice to disobey what he considers an "unlawful" order. The lives of the Mormon leaders are saved.

#### VOCABULARY:

The following words and phrases appear in the program. Teachers may wish to check for student understanding:

Mormon	heathen
adhere	precedence
persecution	throw down the gauntlet
extermination	defiance
expulsion	butchery
oblige	prophet
sanctuary	tried in absentia
abolitionist	stand on ceremony
scalawags	insubordination
Whig Party	polygyny (polygamy)

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why did Lucas and Doniphan view Sidney Rigdon's "extermination" speech so differently?
2. Doniphan urged Smith to respond to the Rigdon speech and gave his reasons. What did Smith do, and why did it so frustrate Doniphan?
3. Caldwell County was created as a Mormon sanctuary. Did those Mormons who settled outside the county get what they deserved? Explain.
4. Governor Boggs, on more than one occasion, demonstrated calm, reasonable leadership; yet he eventually sanctioned the extermination of the Mormons. Can you explain his behavior? Is it rational?
5. Can Smith's tactic of intimidating Justice of the Peace, Adam Black, be defended? Did Smith have any practical alternatives?
6. In the 1950s and 1960s some Southern whites referred to Negroes as "niggras." Consider Lucas's mispronunciation of the word Mormon. Was it calculated? Explain.

7. Colonel Bogart took an oath to support the Constitution of the United States. How did he violate that oath? Give several examples.
8. In at least one instance, Joseph Smith took the law into his own hands. He also demonstrated considerable restraint. Can you give examples?
9. Lucas saw Governor Boggs's order as a justification for extermination. Doniphan remarked: "I don't think the Governor intended to sanction butchery." What did Doniphan mean? Do you agree with his interpretation? Why?

#### ACTIVITY:

"Roach" Kellogg's death was used by Bogart and Lucas to arouse the Governor. Ask each member of the class to write a paragraph where they give an accurate description of the events leading to the death of "Sergeant" Kellogg. Discuss the possible reactions of Governor Boggs to these student accounts.

#### FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION:

1. On March 16, 1968, American soldiers killed more than 100 unarmed civilians, including children, in what history remembers as the My Lai Massacre. Conduct research into this Vietnam War incident. What reasons were given by the participants for the killings?

For further insight into the consequences of obedience to orders, view the films *Breaker Morant* and *Gallipoli*. Compare and contrast the actions of men under orders to the actions of General Doniphan.

2. Religious persecution in the United States has not been restricted to acts against the Mormons. Find out about intolerance of Jews, Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Amish, and more recently Hare Krishna and the followers of Dr. Moon. What justifications did you discover?