
I Have a Question

Questions of general gospel interest answered for guidance, not as official statements of Church policy.

Should we work toward home ownership? If so, what are ways we can do this, considering today's inflated housing costs and high interest rates?

William E. Berrett, "I Have a Question," Ensign, Oct. 1979, 29

Richard Linford, manager of Program Development and Marketing Services for Church Welfare Services Church leaders have encouraged couples to buy a home and pay off the mortgage. They have given this encouragement even though buying a home is admittedly a difficult task—one that more often than not involves long-term debt.

President J. Reuben Clark said:

“Let every head of every household aim to own his own home, free from mortgage. Let every man who has a garden spot, garden it; every man who owns a farm, farm it.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, p. 26)

President Ezra Taft Benson summarized the Church teaching about going into debt for a home in these words:

“Our inspired Church leaders have always urged Latter-day Saints to get out of debt, live within our means, and pay as we go. ...

“Now I do not mean to say that all debt is bad. Of course not. Sound business debt and reasonable debt for education is one of the elements of growth. Sound mortgage credit is a real help to a family that must borrow for a home.” (*Church News*, 17 Mar. 1962, p. 13)

A main reason for working toward home ownership is the stability of sinking deep and meaningful roots. Because of the feeling of permanency that comes from owning your own home, you feel a responsibility to neighbors and to the community. Your children feel a security that is based on having permanent friends, family, and a place of one's own. Because the home is yours, family members feel more inclined to beautify and fix up the property.

Agreed, buying a home may be difficult, but there are ways to cut costs. If you are buying a house for the first time you may wish to—

1. Reduce the size of house you buy or build now, but choose or plan it so it is easy to expand later.

2. Reduce the cost of financing by shopping for the best mortgage terms and rates, by making a large down payment, and by keeping the mortgage term as short as you can while keeping up with your monthly payments.
3. Reduce the quality of the house by choosing less expensive features that do not sacrifice basic livability. Consider alternative designs, roofing, interior walls, windows, heating systems, and insulation.
4. Reduce the land cost by living farther from expensive areas and by shopping carefully.

(See *How to Live with Inflation*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. News & World Report Books, 1974, pp. 171–72.)

These additional suggestions may also prove valuable:

5. Some real estate companies permit you to do painting or repair work on the house in lieu of the down payment.
6. Your family organization might help you with financing.
7. Build part of a house and live in the completed section until you have the time and money to finish the project.
8. Live in a smaller or otherwise less desirable home until you can save enough for the home you need and desire.
9. Buy the land first and save until you can afford to build a home on it.

If you already have your house, you might review your mortgage contract to see if you can accelerate payment of the mortgage by increasing principal payments. You may also wish to establish a savings program and apply your savings to pay off the mortgage. Save more money by using your resources wisely.

Gospel topic: financial management