
First Presidency Message

Principles of Temporal Salvation

*By President Marion G. Romney
Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

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We face today a whole range of serious economic and social conditions. But facing periods of economic stress, even deprivation, is not new to us as a church. Historically, the Saints have more than once faced such trials. As a result, the Lord from the early days of the Church has guided his leadership to see clearly certain correct principles. Most Church members of this generation, however, have not personally encountered serious economic and social disruption, and thus from their own experience have not learned how to deal with such problems. It is for this reason that we feel compelled to reaffirm certain basic principles of temporal salvation.

At the opening of this century, President Joseph F. Smith explained the importance of temporal salvation and its relationship to spiritual salvation:

"You must continue to bear in mind that the temporal and spiritual are blended. They are not separate. One cannot be carried on without the other, so long as we are here in mortality. ...

"The Latter-day Saints believe not only in the gospel of spiritual salvation, but also in the gospel of temporal salvation. We have to look after the cattle, ... the gardens and the farms, ... and other necessary things for the maintenance of ourselves and our families in the earth. ... We do not feel that it is possible for men to be really good and faithful Christian people unless they can also be good, faithful, honest and industrious people. Therefore, *we preach the gospel of industry, the gospel of economy, the gospel of sobriety.*" (*Gospel Doctrine*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939, p. 208; emphasis added.)

The most fundamental principles of temporal salvation include two concepts: providing for oneself—*self reliance*—and providing for one's family—*family reliance*. The first principle, that of self-reliance, grows out of a fundamental doctrine of the Church—that of agency. The doctrine of agency is based on the truth that the basic essence of man is comprised of spirit matter, or intelligence, which by its very nature is independent "in that sphere in which God has placed it, *to act for itself.* ... *Behold, here is the agency of man.*" (See D&C 93:26-38; emphasis added.)

As a result of this eternal condition, Elohim, in creating man and placing him on this earth, gave him his agency to act for himself. While this agency applies to all facets of life, with respect for temporal affairs the Lord makes this specific elaboration:

“For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures.”

“For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be *agents* unto themselves.” (D&C 104:13, 17; emphasis added.)

Thus, we understand that all is in place so that man can, if he so chooses, work out his salvation—both temporal and spiritual—and can achieve the benefits promised in this, his second estate. The self-reliance we speak of in the Church, then, grows out of eternal truths connected with the doctrines of intelligence and agency. Consequently, self-reliance, as taught by the prophets, becomes a fundamental truth in the gospel plan.

Self-reliance implies the individual development of skills and abilities and then their application to provide for one’s own needs and wants. It further implies that one will achieve those skills through self-discipline and then, through self-restraint and charity, use those skills to bless himself and others. That the Lord expects all his children of sound mind and body to thus perform in this second estate is made clear in many scriptural passages whose central thought focuses on *work*—personal, earnest, life-sustaining work.

For example, in the beginning the Lord established the rule that work is the means by which men are to obtain a living when he said to Adam, “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.” (Gen. 3:19.)

To Israel, this guideline was renewed:

“Six days shalt thou labour.” (Ex. 20:9.)

In this last dispensation, the Lord has again spoken plainly on the subject. “Thou shalt not be idle,” he said. “For he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer.” (D&C 42:42.) “And the idler shall not have place in the Church, except he repent and mend his ways.” (D&C 75:29.)

In light of these scriptures, no member should desire or seek to voluntarily shift the responsibility for his own maintenance to another. Rather, each member, through work, should seek to find great satisfaction in personal achievement; and thus, he will be entitled to the fruits of his labors—both temporal and spiritual.

Furthermore, self-reliance, as we understand it, implies at least one additional thought—personal accountability. Abinadi tells us that in spiritual matters, we shall all be “brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to [our] works whether they be good or whether they be evil.” (Mosiah 16:10.)

Just as each individual is accountable for his choices and actions in spiritual matters, so also is he accountable in temporal matters. If we have been frugal and saved for a rainy

day, then we can more easily weather the financial storm. If we have lived beyond our means, then we pay the consequences of our own actions when the bills come. If we have kept pace in our chosen field of labor, then we can anticipate advancement or increase as opportunity knocks. Thus, it is through our *own* efforts and decisions that we *earn* our way in this life. While the Lord will magnify us in both subtle and dramatic ways, he can only guide our footsteps when we move our feet. Ultimately, our own actions determine our blessings—or lack of them. It is a direct consequence of both agency and accountability. And since we are responsible for our actions, we are also personally accountable for their consequences. And though we cannot always directly trace the impact of our actions, they are subject to the law of the harvest—“that which we sow, we also shall reap.”

I should now like to develop a second fundamental principle of temporal salvation—that of *family reliance*.

In the Church, the concept of providing for one’s family and of relying on one’s family for growth, mutual care, and help—or family reliance—is equally fundamental to self-reliance. The family is the basic organizational unit of the Church. No agency or institution can or should replace the family. By sacred covenant and eternal priesthood government, the eternal family unit is established. By virtue of the commitment made as a part of that covenant, husbands are obligated to provide for their families. Thus, in the words of the Lord:

“Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken.”

“All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age.” (D&C 85:2, 4.)

And through Paul the Apostle we have the sentiment: “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1 Tim. 5:8.)

Next to one’s own self, the responsibility, the blessing, and great opportunity for lovingly sustaining an individual until he or she leaves mortality rests upon his or her family—parents for their children, children for their parents. The same covenant that obligates parents to care for their children also obligates children to care for their parents when they need it. The commandment to “honor thy father and thy mother” extends to modern Israel and is required for all who are faithful members of the Church.

As a consequence of the principle of family reliance, we should realize that, generally, one has no claim on Church resources to resolve personal temporal problems and needs until the family has done all it can to help. This is the doctrine the Lord establishes when he says, “And after that, they have claim upon the church, or in other words upon the Lord’s storehouse, if their parents have not wherewith to give them.” (D&C 83:5.)

This principle applies without exception to the family for any individual.

But if we would become more godlike in our actions and desires and obtain the Lord's Spirit, we would see that these same principles also apply to our extended family, or that which we used to call "kin," that loving group of uncles, aunts, cousins, as well as brothers and sisters, that extends through the branches of the family tree.

While it is true that the nature of the *responsibility* to help is not as great among extended family members as it is among immediate family members, we shall in no wise lose our reward if our hearts and minds come to grips with the meaning of imparting of our substance "to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants" (Mosiah 4:26). Can any of us see the end result of such familial love in the lives of those thus cared for, prayed for, those thus blessed by our help? Can any of us see the ultimate impact of righteous and loving concern for our kin, regardless of their or our present spiritual stature? More hearts would be melted, more lives turned, more happiness engendered than we can imagine if we fully sought to implement the promise that "charity never faileth." (1 Cor. 13:8.)

There is so much more that many of us could do for our brothers and sisters and for those in need among our kin if we could come to see as the Lord sees. "Let every man esteem his brother as himself. For what man among you having twelve sons [or brothers or sisters, cousins or aunts, relatives divorced or temporarily unemployed], and is no respecter of them, and . . . he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there—and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just? Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine." (D&C 38:25-27.)

Perhaps we can best state these mutual responsibilities in this manner: The immediate family is *obligated* to help each other; the extended family has the *opportunity* to help each other. And when our vision of Christlike love matures, we will joyfully take advantage of the opportunities.

With these basic concepts of temporal salvation in mind—self-reliance and family reliance—it is appropriate to examine their relationship to the Church's welfare plan and the counsel for personal and family preparedness.

The present need for personal and family preparedness is abundantly clear. What may not be as clear is the extent to which we expect individuals and families to be self-reliant. The first line of defense against present-day problems must be the faithful observance by each of us of the counsel we have received. This means—first, individuals; then the family unit. It is only after discovering that the problem or need exceeds the resources of these two levels of assistance that we call upon the Church through our bishops.

The assistance given by bishops is rendered within clear guidelines. We have instructed bishops that the principles of self and family reliance stand firmly as part of the Church's

Welfare Services program. Thus, the emphasis to teach personal and family preparedness guides him as he considers how to help individual family units of his ward to help themselves.

What can a bishop reasonably expect of a person before he calls upon the bishop for assistance? In the early days of the welfare program, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., gave this counsel to those of sound mind and body—those who are expected to be self-reliant:

“Live within your means. Get out of debt. Keep out of debt. Lay by for a rainy day which has always come and will come again. Practice and increase your habits of thrift, industry, economy, frugality.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1937, p. 107.)

“Let every head of every household see to it that he has on hand enough food and clothing, and, where possible, fuel also for at least a year ahead. . . . 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.)

What, then, does it mean to be prepared? Someone proposed a serious question to me a few years ago by asking, “What is the most important item to have stored in your year’s supply?” My response was seriously given—“personal righteousness.” It is important for us to have, as we have been counseled, a year’s supply of food and clothing, and where possible, fuel. We have also been counseled that we should have a reserve of cash to meet emergencies and to carry adequate health, home, and life insurance. Personal and family preparedness, however, is much broader than these tangibles. It must include proper attitudes, a willingness to forego luxuries, prayerful consideration of all major purchases, and learning to live within our means.

Sadly, surveys show that there are many of us who have not followed this counsel, believing evidently, that the Church can and will take care of us. But the greatest resource available to a bishop is the strength of the individuals and family units within his ward. Our limited production projects, canneries, bishops’ storehouses, Deseret Industries, employment centers, LDS Social Services agencies, and other Church efforts only rest on a solid foundation of member preparedness and strength. Members should know that bishops are bound by guidelines. They are instructed to teach their members to live wisely and to turn to their own and their family’s resources first. Only then can the bishop, whom the Lord has charged with determining how the Church can help members of his ward, turn to the resources of the Church.

Such resources include more than food and non-food commodities or fast offering funds. There are many other resources available to the bishop, some more filling than food, more warming than clothes and fuel, and more lasting than money. I refer to the essentials of the gospel and their ability to help us in the solution of our spiritual and temporal problems. In rendering assistance in the Lord’s own way, the bishop’s *first responsibility* is to strengthen the saints by teaching them correct principles which they can implement in their own lives to satisfy many of their wants and needs. He can also

help to secure resource persons from Melchizedek Priesthood quorums who can further advise, train, and assist in overcoming longer-range problems.

Thus, the bishop, as one of his first responsibilities, has the charge to teach the value of self- and family-reliance—indeed, as the Lord’s shepherd, he is to teach every principle of the gospel with its power to lift, sustain, maintain, renew, purify, sanctify, make full, and satisfy our every need and righteous desire. He is to help those who request help to assess their own circumstances, to determine their own goals and objectives, to determine their own plans and their own solutions to their problems—to safely pilot their own course. The bishop is not there to do it for us. His primary role is to be a facilitator, a counselor, a confidant. He will help us deal with any immediate and pressing needs. But the measure and extent of his assistance will be determined by what we and our immediate family have done to solve the problem. Since the individual and family will be seeking to soundly establish themselves on the matter at hand, the resources of the Church Storehouse Resource System will be used only for temporary assistance, to bridge the gap between the problem and its earliest possible resolution.

In addition to help for the needy among us, it is important to remember that all of us have need of the welfare program and one fundamental reason is because our Father is trying to teach us many important eternal truths—the most fundamental of which is love or charity. There is growth incalculable to the human soul when it steps outside of itself and concerns itself with others. Since that is the major work of our Father in Heaven—to work joyously for the advancement and progression of others—how could we think to receive all that he has unless we implement deeply into our own lives his motivations of love, thereby truly becoming his sons and daughters? Thus, it is out of the willing contribution of time, talent, and means from faithful Saints that the elements of the Storehouse Resource System have been established and are sustained, including welfare farms, bishops’ storehouses, LDS Social Services, Deseret Industries, and employment centers. The Church would not now have these limited resources to call upon if the Saints had not lovingly and prayerfully generated and sustained them.

I have attempted to reaffirm certain basic fundamentals: (1) Self-reliance is an eternal and vital principle of temporal salvation. (2) Family-reliance is also a vital principle of temporal salvation and is the answer to many temporal problems. (3) Some members need to rethink their priorities and in some instances redefine and forego “luxuries” and make more adequate provision for their necessities. (4) Members need to understand the role of the bishop in the welfare plan which is that the bishop follows certain guidelines and administers Church assistance under divine inspiration within those guidelines.

It has also been my intention to encourage all Latter-day Saints to review again their personal and family preparedness and to implement immediately the principles and practices that will ensure their self-sufficiency. If we will discuss these truths in our family councils and make a plan to do all in our power to live these principles, we shall all enjoy the promise of the Lord, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear.” (D&C 38:30.)

More importantly, if we live providentially and righteously, we will qualify for the greater promise: “And whoso is found a faithful, a just, and a wise steward shall enter into the joy of his Lord, and shall inherit eternal life.” (D&C 51:19.)

Gospel topics: preparation, self-sufficiency

Ideas for Home Teachers

- 1. Share your feelings about the importance of working and providing for yourself and your family. Or relate a personal experience about the blessings of being prepared. Ask family members to express their feelings about self- and family-reliance.*
2. Discuss ways a family could become better prepared to cope with whatever financial or economic problems might arise.
3. Why is it necessary, as President Romney suggests, that Church members be prepared for emergencies?
4. Are there quotations or scriptural verses in this article that the family might read aloud, or some supplemental scripture you desire to read with them?
5. Would this discussion be better after a pre-visit chat with the head of the house? Is there a message from the quorum leaders or bishop to the household head concerning personal and family preparedness?

[illustration] Painting by Theodore Gorka

[photo] Photography by Eldon Linschoten

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