

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 38: "In Mine Own Way"

(Doctrine and Covenants 38:30; 42:30–31, 42; 58:26–28; 104:13–18)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand the principles of spiritual and temporal welfare and commit ourselves to greater self-reliance and service to the poor and needy.

1. DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL SELF-RELIANCE

Elder Dallin H. Oaks: "At the doctrinal or theoretical level, there is a rich opportunity for confusion over the principle of self-reliance. For example, some have experienced confusion in how the principle of self-reliance applies to the twin goals of temporal well-being and spiritual salvation. **The true principle is self-reliance in temporal matters and ultimate total dependence on our Savior, Jesus Christ, in spiritual matters.** As Nephi taught, 'It is by grace that we are saved, **after all we can do.**' " (2 Ne. 25:23.)

D&C 38:29-30 "Ye hear of wars in far countries, and you say that there will soon be great wars in far countries, but ye know not the hearts of men in your own land. I tell you these things because of your prayers; wherefore, **treasure up wisdom in your bosoms**, lest the wickedness of men reveal these things unto you by their wickedness, in a manner which shall speak in your ears with a voice louder than that which shall shake the earth; **but if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.**

from "The Spiritual Gems of Life" by Jordan Cox

Learning to keep one's heart and mind focused on one's current situation and tasks is a key to successfully accomplishing one's responsibilities and callings in this life. **We often fail in life because our eyes or our hearts are focused somewhere else.** God through His foreknowledge has placed us in our current situations for divine reasons. Only **by completing these experiences with our full heart and mind** are we able to accomplish our divine missions.

SO HOW DO WE KEEP OUR HEART AND MIND FOCUSED ON WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO DO?

As we walk in the sometimes dreary plains of our lives, if we turn our spiritual eyes to the Son—the Son of God—we will see the sparkles of the gems of life. . . Look to see how the light that comes from Christ reflects off these gems:

1. **Looking to Christ** means that our mind and heart are always oriented toward Him. Praying continually in our hearts is essential. It orients us to Christ.
2. **Realize how integral God is** in all that occurs in this life, and that God is in control of all things. The battles we face are not hopeless, cataclysmic, futile struggles but part of God's divine plan. He has the power to control the outcome.
3. God is an integral part of the workings of man. The gem here is that **God is omniscient. He knows all the answers to our problems. He is willing to share those answers with us IF we will engage ourselves in the work.**
4. **Spiritual integrity** I define as the tendency of a person to carry the spiritual loads he or she was intended to carry. There are two important aspects of structural integrity:
 - the first is the **strength of the individual** structural member used in the design;
 - the second is **the framework** used to provide support for the structural members.
--Through the foreknowledge of God **we have been designed to be successful in carrying our loads of trial and tribulation if we stay within God's design limits.**
 - **When we compromise our spiritual strength** through sin or when we deny or ignore our personal talents and gifts that God has given us or when we wrest ourselves from our framework of family and friends—given to us by the foreknowledge of God—we **risk spiritual buckling and catastrophic failure.**
5. The gem of **spiritual momentum**. As Newton discovered, an object that is moving tends to **keep moving**. Friction, on the other hand, tries to keep an object from moving. There are two types of friction: static and dynamic.
 - **When an object is at rest, the force required to overcome its static friction is much greater than the force needed to overcome dynamic friction when the object is still moving.**
 - **Henry Clegg, Jr.**, an early Mormon pioneer, discovered a similar spiritual principle. While crossing the plains, he and his family contracted cholera. His wife died and was laid to rest in an unmarked grave. Henry carried his young son sick with cholera in his arms the rest of that day, only to have him die. Henry retraced his steps to his wife's grave and reburied his son in her arms and then rejoined the wagon train, now five miles away. He stopped writing in his journal for a time. When he wrote again it was simply two words: "**Still moving.**"
6. **No matter how well we perform in our duties in this life, we will all fall short of the goal.** How comforting to know that **the gem of Christ's Atonement** can provide the "extra" spiritual energy to pay the price and satisfy the demands of justice.
 - However, it requires that **we do all we can before the price is paid. . . .**
 - **If we keep focused, God will apply the Atonement to make up the difference so that we can achieve our goal of eternal life.**

2. DEVELOPING TEMPORAL SELF-RELIANCE

To be temporally self-reliant, we must assure that we can use the temporal blessings the Lord has given us to provide for ourselves and our families, including **learning to work** effectively, **storing food** and other essential supplies, **managing our finances** carefully and prudently, and **gaining a good education**.

L. Tom Perry: On a daily basis we witness widely fluctuating inflation; wars; interpersonal conflicts; national disasters; variances in weather conditions; innumerable forces of immorality, crime, and violence; attacks and pressures on the family and individuals; technological advances that make occupations obsolete; and so on. **The need for preparation is abundantly clear.** The great blessing of being prepared gives us freedom from fear, as guaranteed to us by the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants: **"If ye are prepared ye shall not fear"** (D&C 38:30).

Just as it is important to prepare ourselves spiritually, **we must also prepare ourselves for our temporal needs.** Each of us needs to take the time to ask ourselves, **What preparation should I make to care for my needs and the needs of my family?**

We have been instructed for years to **follow at least four requirements in preparing for that which is to come.**

First, gain an adequate education. Learn a trade or a profession to enable you to obtain steady employment that will provide remuneration sufficient to care for yourself and your family...

Second, live strictly within your income and save something for a rainy day. Incorporate in your lives the discipline of budgeting that which the Lord has blessed you with. As regularly as you pay your tithing, set aside an amount needed for future family requirements...

Third, avoid excessive debt....It is so easy to allow consumer debt to get out of hand. If you do not have the discipline to control the use of credit cards, it is better not to have them. A well-managed family does not pay interest-it earns it. The definition I received from a wise boss at one time in my early business career was "Thems that understands interest receives it, thems that don't pays it."

Fourth, acquire and store a reserve of food and supplies that will sustain life. Obtain clothing and build a savings account on a sensible, well-planned basis that can serve well in times of emergency. As long as I can remember, we have been taught to prepare for the future and to obtain a year's supply of necessities. I would guess that the years of plenty have almost universally caused us to set aside this counsel. I believe the time to disregard this counsel is over. ("If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 35-36).

Work

Elder Neal A. Maxwell: **"Work is always a spiritual necessity** even if, for some, work is not an economic necessity" (*Ensign*, May 1998, 38).

D&C 42:42 Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer.

D&C 56:17 Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose bellies are not satisfied, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men's goods, **whose eyes are full of greediness, and who will not labor with your own hands!**

"To become self-reliant, a person must work. **Work is physical, mental, or spiritual effort.** It is a basic source of happiness, self-worth, and prosperity. (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* [1998], 257).

Storage of food and other necessities

The Church Handbook of Instructions: "Church leaders have not given an exact formula for what to store. Rather, they suggest that Church members begin by **storing what would be required to keep them alive if they did not have anything else to eat.** ... "Through careful planning, most Church members can store a year's supply of the basic items needed to sustain life. However, some members do not have the money or space for such storage, and some are prohibited by law from storing a year's supply of food. These members should store as much as they can. (Book 2, 258).

President Ezra Taft Benson: "Our bishops storehouses are not intended to stock enough commodities to care for all the members of the Church. **Storehouses are only established to care for the poor and the needy.** For this reason, members of the Church have been instructed to **personally store a year's supply** of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel. By following this counsel, **most members will be prepared and able to care for themselves and their family members, and be able to share with others as may be needed.**" (Conference Report, Apr 1977)

Financial security

President Gordon B. Hinckley warned against the dangers of debt: "I urge you to **be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases** to avoid debt to the extent possible. **Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.** ...If you have paid your debts, if you have a reserve, even though it be small, then should storms howl about your head, you will have shelter for your wives and children and **peace in your hearts**" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 54).

3. CARING FOR THE NEEDY

D&C 42:30-31 And behold, thou wilt **remember the poor**, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken. And inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, **ye will do it unto me**; and they shall be laid before the bishop of my church and his counselors, two of the elders, or high priests, such as he shall appoint or has appointed and set apart for that purpose.

D&C 44:6 Behold, I say unto you, that ye must **visit the poor and the needy** and administer to their relief, that they may be kept until all things may be done according to my law which ye have received. Amen.

D&C 52:40 And remember in all things **the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted**, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple.

D&C 56:16 **Wo unto you rich men, that will not give your substance to the poor**, for your riches will canker your souls; and this shall be your lamentation in the day of visitation, and of judgment, and of indignation: The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved!

D&C 88:123 See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to **impart one to another** as the gospel requires.

D&C 104:18 If any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and **impart not his portion**, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

Mosiah 4:17-18 Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just --But I say unto you, O man, **whosoever doeth this, the same hath great cause to repent.**"

4. THE CHURCH WELFARE PROGRAM

In the 1930s the Saints, like many other people in the world, were struggling with unemployment and poverty during the Great Depression. In 1936, as a result of inspiration from the Lord, **President Heber J. Grant** established the Church welfare program as an organized way **to assist those in need and help all members become self-reliant.**

First Presidency: "Our primary purpose was to set up a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people. **The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves**" (Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3).

James E. Faust: "Teachings pertaining to Welfare Services emphasize and place considerable importance on **both individual and family independence.** Six principles form the foundation of the infrastructure of the Welfare program. Three of these principles emphasize responsibility to care for one's own needs: **work, self-reliance, and stewardship**; the other three focus on responsibility to others: **love, service, and consecration**" ("Establishing the Church Welfare Services," *Ensign*, November 1982, 91-93).

President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who served as a Counselor in the First Presidency for 28 years, emphasized, "**The real long term objective of the Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit**" (J. Reuben Clark Jr., Special meeting of Stake Presidents, 2 Oct. 1936).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin: "The welfare program of the Church is well known throughout the world. People from all walks of life travel to Church headquarters to see firsthand how the Church cares for the poor and needy **without creating dependency on the part of those who receive or bitterness on the part of those who give.** A president of a country, after visiting Welfare Square, canceled the remainder of his appointments for the day. "There is something here that is more important than anything else I have on my schedule," he said. "I must stay and learn more" ("Inspired Church Welfare": April 1999)

5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Spencer W. Kimball: "In reviewing the Lord's counsel to us on the importance of preparedness, I am impressed with the plainness of the message. **The Savior made it clear that we cannot place sufficient oil in our preparedness lamps by simply avoiding evil. We must also be anxiously engaged in a positive program of preparation.**

The Lord will not translate one's good hopes and desires and intentions into works. Each of us must do that for himself" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 1969, 8).

Ted L. Gibbons: "**We must give aid to the physically and spiritually needy among us and around us. Helping others with their problems is not easy work. Such service often requires a tremendous effort.**

A few years ago I was assigned a new home teacher. On his first visit to our home, he spent time alone with me. "How can I help your family?" he wanted to know.

"Help us read the scriptures," I told him. "Years ago when the children were little, we read through the *Book of Mormon* together a couple of times. But in the years since, we haven't done very well. I feel like we need to be reading regularly. If you could help us get started again, I'd be grateful."

We discussed the best time to get the family together and decided the morning hours were preferable. He said he would give the matter some thought and get back to me.

The next morning, at 6:40 a.m., a knock came at our door. I dragged myself from bed and down the hall to see who was there. Our home teacher stood framed in the open doorway.

"Time for scriptures," he said, and walked in.

We got the rest of the family up, staggered to the table, read for twenty minutes, and he was gone. The next morning, at precisely 6:40, he was there again. And the next morning, and the next and the next. **He came and taught our family every morning for three months!** I believe that scripture reading is now an indispensable habit with us. We had a problem. He helped us solve it" (Ted L. Gibbons, *This Life is a Test*, 84).

Boyd K. Packer: "We have been taught to store a year's supply of food, clothing, and, if possible, fuel—at home. ... Can we not see that the same principle applies to **inspiration and revelation, the solving of problems, to counsel, and to guidance? We need to have a source of it stored in every home.** ... If we lose our emotional and spiritual independence, our self-reliance, we can be weakened quite as much, perhaps even more, than when we become dependent materially" (*Ensign*, May 1978, 91–92).

Dieter F. Uchtdorf: "Too often we notice the needs around us, **hoping that someone from far away will magically appear to meet those needs.** ... When we do this, we deprive our neighbor of the service we could render, and **we deprive ourselves of the opportunity to serve"** (Conference Report, Oct. 2011).

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO HELP US SERVE:

- Approach service in your community without any thought except to make your community better.
- If you don't know where to begin, investigate opportunities that will allow you to identify a need that exists.
- Look around your community. What needs or challenges do you see or hear about?
- Newspapers and schools may also offer information about needs that can be filled.
- Ask friends in other churches about the service projects in which they are involved.
- Volunteer on a regular basis, if possible. Serve consistently, rather than only during holidays. It also allows you to develop personal relationships with those you serve.
- If serving regularly is not possible, be willing to contribute whatever you can. Even a little bit will help.
- Don't try to make your involvement in community service a missionary opportunity. Your service alone will say much about you and your faith.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN SERVE IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY:

- Volunteer with a local community organization.
- Support worthy community activities that help the poor meet basic needs or learn skills.
- Help new members of your community learn English. Assist with literacy programs.
- Volunteer at a local homeless shelter, refugee organization, low-income health clinic, or school.
- Support after-school activities for youth.
- Support local food drives by food banks and pantries.
- Donate to the Humanitarian Aid Fund, which allows the Church to help people throughout the world by providing relief and help so people may help themselves.

Mosiah 4:17-18: **And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition unto you in vain, and turn him out to perish.**