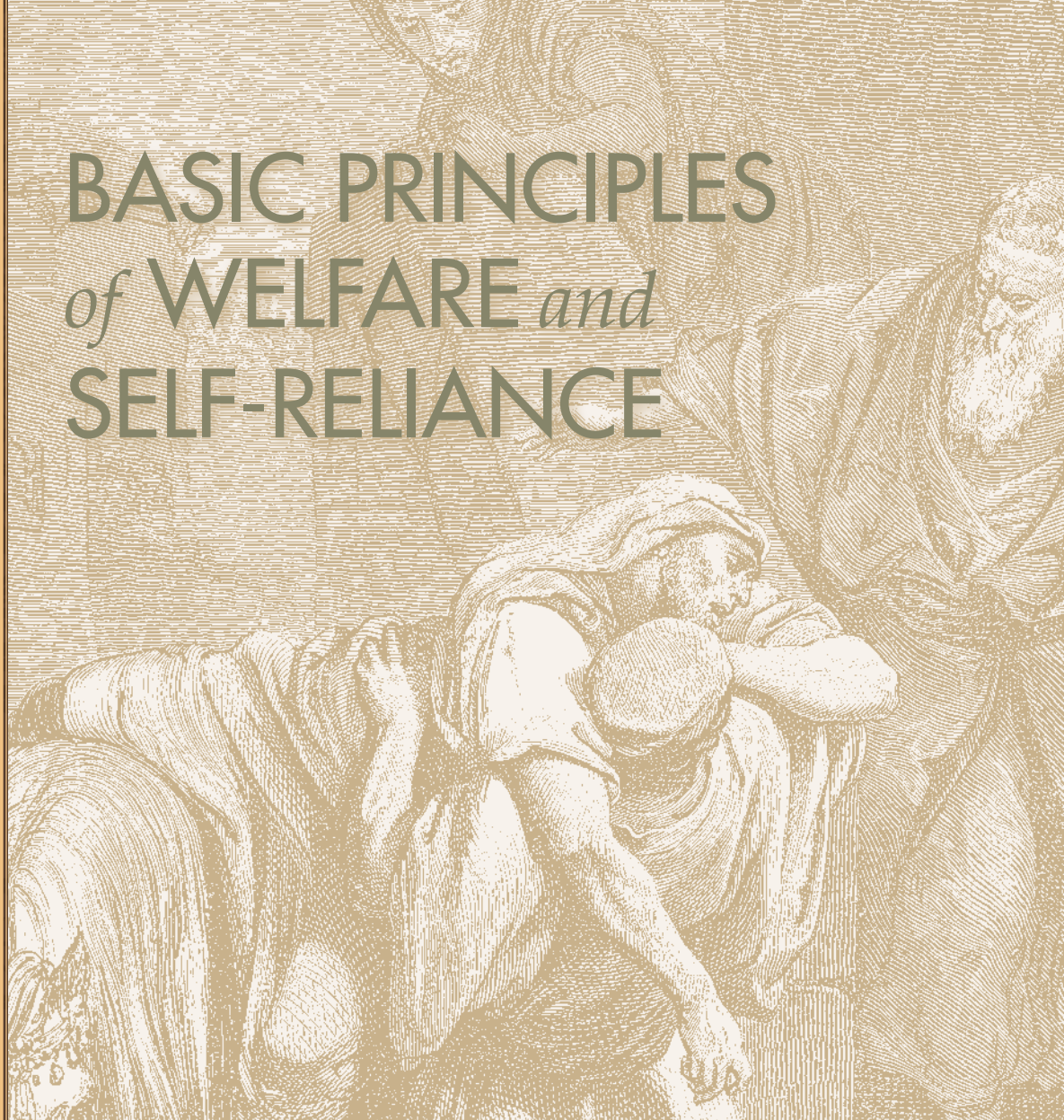
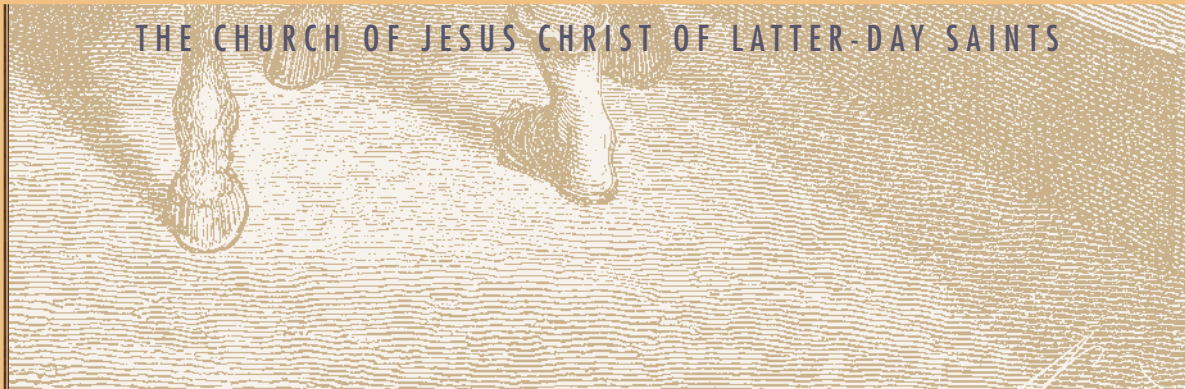


BASIC PRINCIPLES *of* WELFARE *and* SELF-RELIANCE



THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Cover art: *Arrival of the Good Samaritan at the Inn*, by Paul Gustave Doré.

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

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Printed in the United States of America
English approval 12/08. 08288

ELDER ROBERT D. HALES

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

A Gospel Vision of Welfare: Faith in Action



My brothers and sisters, I am grateful for this opportunity to visit with you about a gospel vision of the priesthood principles of welfare in the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

The economic clouds that have long threatened the world are now fully upon us.

The impact of this economic storm on our Heavenly Father's children requires a gospel vision of welfare today more than ever before. Priesthood-based welfare principles are both temporal and spiritual. They are also eternal and apply in every circumstance. Whether we are rich or poor, they are for us.

Whenever we practice the principles of welfare, we are living "pure religion" as it is defined in scripture (James 1:27). The Savior taught, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). He also taught that we not only seek out and "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" but we also "keep [ourselves] unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). In other words, we not only *do* good; we strive to *be* good.

This, then, is the gospel vision of welfare: to put our faith in Jesus Christ into action. We serve others as the Spirit directs. As we live gospel welfare principles, we apply the Savior's teachings here in mortality.

What, then, are these principles of welfare? How can we apply them as spiritual and temporal building blocks in our daily lives?

PROVIDENT LIVING AND SELF-RELIANCE

The first building block may be described as provident living. This means joyfully living within our means and preparing for the ups and downs of life so that we can be ready for the rainy-day emergencies when they come into our lives.

Provident living means not coveting the things of this world. It means using the resources of the earth wisely and not being wasteful, even in times of plenty. Provident living means avoiding excessive debt and being content with what we have.

We live in an age of entitlement. Many believe they should have all that others have—right now. Unable to delay gratification, they go into debt to buy what they cannot afford. The results always affect both their temporal and spiritual welfare.

When we go into debt, we give away some of our precious, priceless agency and place ourselves in self-imposed servitude. We obligate our time, energy, and means to repay what we have borrowed—resources that could have been used to help ourselves, our families, and others.

As our freedom is diminished by debt, increasing hopelessness depletes us physically, depresses us mentally, and burdens us spiritually. Our self-image is affected, as well as our relationships with our spouse and children, with our friends and neighbors, and ultimately with the Lord.

To pay our debts now and to avoid future debt require us to exercise faith in the Savior—not just to *do* better but to *be* better. It takes great faith to utter those simple words, "We can't afford it." It takes faith to trust that life will be better as we sacrifice our wants in order to meet our own and others' needs.

I testify that happy is the man who lives within his means and is able to save a little for future needs. As we live providently and increase our gifts and talents, we become more self-reliant. Self-reliance is taking responsibility for our own spiritual and temporal welfare and for those whom Heavenly Father has

entrusted to our care. Only when we are self-reliant can we truly emulate the Savior in serving and blessing others.

It is important to understand that self-reliance is a means to an end. Our ultimate goal is to become like the Savior, and that goal is enhanced by our unselfish service to others. Our ability to serve is increased or diminished by the level of our self-reliance.

As President Marion G. Romney once said: “Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 135; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 93).

PAYING TITHES AND OFFERINGS

How, then, do we obtain Heavenly Father’s help so that we have enough for our own needs and also enough to serve others? One of the fundamental principles of welfare is the payment of tithes and offerings.

The primary purpose of tithing is to develop our faith. By keeping the commandment to pay “one-tenth of all [our increase] annually” (D&C 119:4), we become better—our faith grows and sustains us through the trials, tribulations, and sorrows of life.

With the payment of tithes, we also learn to control our desires and appetites for the things of this world, to be honest in our dealings with our fellowmen, and to make sacrifices for others.

As our faith grows, so will our desire to keep the commandment to pay fast offerings. This offering is at least the cost of the two meals we do not eat while we are fasting. Fast offerings are the means provided for us to participate in anonymous giving to bless our brothers and sisters in spiritual and temporal need—giving with no expectation of earthly credit or benefit. Freely giving allows us to follow the pattern of the Savior, who freely gave His life for all mankind. He said, “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 52:40).

As true disciples of Christ, we also give as did the good Samaritan, who boldly rescued his unknown brother on the highway side (see Luke 10:25–37). Said Joseph Smith, “A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race” (*History of the Church*, 4:227).

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

As Latter-day prophets have counseled, some of the most important welfare building blocks have to do with preparing for the future.

Budgeting

Preparing for the future includes making a spending and savings plan with our income. Carefully making and keeping a family or personal budget can help us recognize and control the difference between our wants and needs. Reviewing that budget in a family council will allow our children to learn and practice wise spending habits and to participate in planning and saving for the future.

Education

Preparing for the future also includes obtaining an education or vocational training and finding gainful employment. If you are currently employed, do all that you can to be a valued, essential part of the organization you work for. Work hard and be a “labourer . . . worthy of [your] hire” (Luke 10:7; see also D&C 31:5; 70:12; 84:79; 106:3).

As companies continue to downsize or close, even ideal employees may find themselves needing to find new employment. This is an opportunity to rely on the Lord, to grow, and to be strengthened. If you are seeking a new job, increase your faith in the Lord’s desire and power to bless you. Also seek counsel from those you trust, and don’t be afraid to network and ask for help in finding a new job. If necessary, change your lifestyle—and possibly your place of residence—to live within your means. Willingly seek additional training and learn new skills, regardless of your age. Maintain your health and stay close to your spouse and children. And, above all, be grateful. Express your gratitude in prayer for all that has been given to you.

Heavenly Father loves you. His Son has promised, “All these things shall give [you] experience, and shall be for [your] good” (D&C 122:7).

Spiritual Preparation

My brothers and sisters, now is the time to lay the building blocks of welfare in our lives and teach our brothers and sisters to do the same. The scriptures teach us, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30). By keeping the commandments and living welfare principles, we can have the Spirit of the Lord to be with us always—to sustain us through the storms of these last days and speak peace to our souls.

Just as we save our temporal resources for rainy days, keeping the commandments, praying, reading the scriptures, and relying upon the Holy Ghost prepare us for the rainy-day tests of life. By our obedience, we store up the faith we need to meet the vicissitudes and challenges of life. Keeping ourselves unspotted from the world—being “good” in this way—we are able to do good for our brothers and sisters throughout the world, both temporally and spiritually.

In closing, may I share just one example of how we do this in humanitarian service?

Every year Church members contribute to the digging of wells where there is no other source of drinking water. Consider the benefit of just one of these wells, dug in a remote village. While some might characterize it as a strictly temporal blessing, what are the spiritual blessings to a mother who had previously walked hours to get water and more hours to bring it back to her children? Before the well was dug, what time did she have to teach her children the gospel, to pray with them, and to nurture them in the love of the Lord? What time did she have to study the scriptures herself, ponder them, and receive strength to bear the challenges of her life? By putting their faith into action, Church members helped quench the temporal thirst of her family and also provided a way for them to drink freely of the water of life and never thirst again. By being faithful in living welfare principles, they were able to help dig “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

I testify that living the priesthood principles of welfare is the measure of our Christian love. It is our sacred opportunity to apply Christ’s restored gospel on earth—to put our faith into action and receive a fulness of His joy in this life and in the world to come.

I bear my special witness that our Savior lives and that He gave His life for our eternal welfare. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

JULIE B. BECK

Relief Society General President

The Welfare Responsibilities of the Relief Society President



PURPOSE OF RELIEF SOCIETY

My dear brothers and sisters, it is a privilege to speak to you about the responsibilities of the ward Relief Society president regarding welfare. Behind me are portraits of the women who have served as general presidents of

the Relief Society. As I have studied their histories, I am reminded that this organization has accomplished its work in times of growth and prosperity but also during times of war, famine, epidemic, and depression. The lessons we learn from the past can help us navigate in our day as we are experiencing natural disasters, wars, government upheavals, personal trials, and economic troubles. Relief Society is meant to provide *relief*, which means to lift up, to lighten, to raise someone up or out of trouble.¹ We have always been charged with helping women and their families in their lifelong responsibilities to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and serve the Lord and His children. Today we will focus on that portion of our work that concerns welfare as we discuss working under the direction of the bishop to organize, teach, and inspire

sisters to look after the poor and needy and help them become self-reliant.

LOOKING AFTER THE POOR AND THE NEEDY

Relief Society, which has responsibility “to look after the spiritual welfare and salvation . . . of all the female members of the Church,”² was organized to provide “relief of the poor, the destitute, the widow and the orphan, and for the exercise of all benevolent purposes.”³ This includes “relief of poverty, relief of illness, relief of doubt, relief of ignorance—relief of all that hinders the joy and progress of woman.”⁴

I have heard President Monson speak with great appreciation about the Relief Society presidents who served with him when he was a young bishop. He and his Relief Society presidents followed the same model we have today. Under his direction, the Relief Society president went into the homes of the members to discover whether or not there was sufficient food, furnishings, skills, emotional strength, or other necessities. With the help of prayer and the spiritual gifts they possessed, his Relief Society presidents sought inspiration to make a proper evaluation of the needs in those homes. Using their assessment, he was then able to develop a self-reliance plan for his people.

SELF-RELIANCE AND PROVIDENT LIVING

Along with the responsibility for helping the bishop look after those in need, Relief Society takes the lead in organizing, teaching, and inspiring Relief Society sisters to become personally self-reliant. To understand their responsibilities, leaders could ask some important questions:

1. What is self-reliance?
2. What are the personal responsibilities of every sister regarding self-reliance?
3. How self-reliant are the sisters in my ward?
4. What self-reliance skills do the sisters in my ward need to acquire?
5. How will we help one another become more self-reliant?

“Self-reliance means using all of our blessings from Heavenly Father to care for ourselves and our families and to find solutions for our own problems.”⁵ Each of

us has a responsibility to try to avoid problems before they happen and to learn to overcome challenges when they occur.

This painting, which hangs in my office, shows a woman in a storage room. What we learn from this



Woman With Food Storage,
by Judith A. Mehr

painting is not so much a lesson about storage rooms and home canning. Look at the woman. She stands alone, and we do not know if she is married or single. She is wearing an apron, which implies that she has been working. Work is a foundational principle of self-

reliance. We can assume that all the resources around her are the result of her own efforts. She has made some personal preparations. Look at her face. She seems a little weary but very peaceful. Her eyes show the contentment in her soul. She has the look of a self-reliant woman.

How do we become self-reliant? We become self-reliant through obtaining sufficient knowledge, education, and literacy; by managing money and resources wisely, being spiritually strong, preparing for emergencies and eventualities; and by having physical health and social and emotional well-being.

So what skills do we need to help us become self-reliant? It was important for my grandmother to know how to kill and pluck a chicken. I have not yet had the necessity to kill and pluck a chicken. However, even in the early days of the Church, Brigham Young pled with the sisters to learn to prevent illness in families, establish home industries, and learn accounting and book-keeping and other practical skills.⁶ Those principles still apply today. Education continues to be vitally important. Each of us is a teacher and a learner, and literacy, technical, and reasoning skills are a daily requirement. There is also a great need for better communication

skills in marriages and families, and good parenting skills have never been more important. We also see an increase of debt and consumerism in the world.

I asked several bishops what self-reliance skills the sisters in their wards needed most, and they said budgeting. Women need to understand the implications of buying on credit and not living within a budget. The second skill bishops listed was cooking. Meals prepared and eaten at home generally cost less, are healthier, and contribute to stronger family relationships.

I have seen great examples of sisters all over the world helping each other become self-reliant. In the United States, sisters are gathering to learn how to budget their finances so they can buy carefully and reduce debt. Older sisters are teaching younger women how to cook and prepare wholesome meals at home. In Ghana, sisters learn to read together. In Peru, sisters seal up rice and beans in packages so they won't go hungry when earthquakes strike. In the Philippines, where typhoons occur with regularity, sisters assemble short-term supplies and food to use when they need to evacuate their homes.



The Family Prayer, by Abelardo Loria Lovendino,
courtesy Church History Museum

A second painting that hangs in my office shows how this principle can be applied everywhere. Here we see a Filipino family in their nipa hut of sticks, which sits on stilts above ground. We see in the foreground their large jar of water. They have a basket of mangos, they have some fuel to cook with, and they have a simple source of light to see by. They are sitting at the dinner table with heads bowed in prayer. Hanging on the wall are the hand-stitched words "Families are

Forever." I would imagine the mother of this family learned many of the self-reliance principles and skills shown here in Relief Society meetings and activities.

How self-reliant are the sisters in your ward? How can you discern their needs? And who should help the Relief Society president in this effort? Because this is a divine work and because a Relief Society president has a divine call, she is entitled to divine help. She also has the help of good visiting teachers who understand their responsibility to watch over and care for those sisters. Through the reports she receives from them and other sisters, she is able to learn about their needs. She can also use the help of committees and younger sisters, who have great energy and are ready to serve.



Midwife: *Thy Path Her Chosen Way*, by Crystal Haueter, courtesy Church History Museum

This third painting that hangs in my office depicts a pioneer midwife. It reminds me that one sister, with one skill, can be a blessing to many. An example of this is my great-great-grandmother Mary Ann Hamblin, who was a midwife. She helped bring over 2,000 babies into this world. She made a valuable contribution to the Lord's storehouse of time and talents.

Fulfilling Our Responsibilities

Providing for ourselves and others is evidence that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like many of you, I have been inspired and taught principles of self-reliance by the example of my mother and other Relief Society sisters. One such woman was my sweet

mother-in-law, June, who served in Relief Society presidencies almost continuously for 30 years. When she passed away suddenly last year, she left evidence of her self-reliant life. She had a current temple recommend and well-used scriptures and gospel study manuals. We lovingly divided up the pots, pans, and dishes with which she had prepared thousands of meals. She left us quilts she had made from old clothing. She believed in the old adage "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without." We saw the supply of food she had grown, preserved, and stored. Particularly touching were her little account books in which she faithfully recorded her expenditures over many years. Because she lived providently, she left some money she had saved for emergencies, and she left no debts! Most importantly, she had taught and inspired many others with the skills she had acquired during her faithful life.

As leaders, we demonstrate our faith when we use our time, talents, meetings, and activities to first take care of the things that are essential for temporal and spiritual welfare and salvation. As we do this, love, unity, joy, sisterhood, and blessings will abound. I testify that the work of Relief Society is an integral part of the Lord's restored Church and that His work is directed by a living prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See *Online Etymology Dictionary*, "relief" and "relieve," www.etymonline.com.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 1998), 185.
3. *History of the Church*, 4:567.
4. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham (1987), 308.
5. Instructional Resources for Welfare Trainers, Lesson 2: Self-Reliance, 3; PDF available online at providentliving.org.
6. See Eliza R. Snow, "Female Relief Society," *Deseret News*, Apr. 22, 1868, 1; Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, July 28, 1869, 5.

BISHOP H. DAVID BURTON

Presiding Bishop

The Welfare Responsibilities of the Bishop



SEEKING OUT AND CARING FOR THE NEEDY

Hello, I am Bishop David Burton, and today I have the privilege of being with six marvelous bishops from the Centerville Utah North Stake. We are at Welfare Square in Salt Lake City. Thank

you for joining us as we discuss the responsibilities of bishops in seeking out and caring for those who may not be self-reliant.

As we begin, I am reminded of two quotations from President J. Reuben Clark Jr. President Clark served for many years in the First Presidency of the Church and was very instrumental in the development of what was then called the Church Security Plan and is now referred to as the Church welfare plan.

On one occasion, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. telephoned a bishop to tell him that a single mother with three little children had, that very day, moved into the bishop's ward. President Clark asked the bishop to go as quickly as possible to her new residence and do what he could to help her.

President Clark told the bishop, "If I could, I would help this sister, but I am only the First Counselor to the President of the Church and do not have authority to write a bishop's order on the storehouse. You have

that right," he said, "and the privilege, and for that reason I am calling you, requesting you to do what you feel should be done in her case."

On another occasion, President Clark, while giving a very powerful address, said:

"By the word of the Lord the sole mandate to care for and the sole discretion in caring for, the poor of the Church is lodged [with] the bishops. . . . It is his duty and his only to determine to whom, when, how, and how much shall be given to any member of his ward from Church funds. . . .

"This is his high and solemn obligation imposed by the Lord Himself. The bishop cannot escape his duty; he cannot shirk it; he cannot pass it on to someone else, and so relieve himself. Whatever help he calls in, he is still responsible" (quoted in Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 132; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 90).

What are the bishop's welfare-related responsibilities? They are at least threefold! They include:

1. Teaching members the basic principles of self-reliance and encouraging them to become self-reliant. The two recently published booklets, *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances* and *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage* can be very helpful in helping members understand the importance of self-reliance..
2. Helping ward council members know and act upon their responsibilities.
3. Providing assistance according to basic welfare principles.

The newly published booklet entitled *Providing in the Lord's Way: Summary of a Leader's Guide to Welfare* will remind you of the basic objective of welfare, self-reliance, and supporting principles.

THE LORD'S STOREHOUSE

The Lord has revealed that members of the Church should "impart of [their] substance unto the poor, . . . and they shall be laid before the bishop . . . [and] kept in my storehouse, to administer to the poor and the needy" (D&C 42:31-32, 34).

Each bishop has a variety of “tools” laid before him to assist in helping the poor. We call this collection of tools the Lord’s storehouse.

The storehouse includes:

1. Cash contributed as members live and receive the blessings of participating in the fast.
2. Commodities produced internally or purchased for use by the bishops.
3. The time, talents, and resources of members.

These talents, as may be helpful and required, along with the cash and commodities, constitute the Lord’s storehouse. The Lord’s storehouse is available to every bishop and exists in every ward. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the Lord’s storehouse is not limited to a building or a warehouse filled with commodities awaiting distribution.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

As bishops carry out their divine mandate to seek out and care for the poor in the Lord’s way, they will often be required to make difficult decisions. Bishops are blessed with and very much entitled to the gift of discernment as they are faced with this task. Each individual case that you deal with requires inspiration. Guided by the Spirit, while keeping in mind basic welfare principles, bishops can best determine who is in need, how much and what kind of assistance is needed, and how long it may be required.

You may ask, what are some of these basic, time-tested welfare principles that will help bishops optimize their decisions?

1. Seek out the poor.

Bishops should keep in mind that it is their responsibility to seek out the poor. It is not enough to assist only when asked. The bishop should encourage priesthood and Relief Society leaders, along with home teachers and visiting teachers, to help identify those who need assistance.

2. Promote personal responsibility.

Bishops have the responsibility to keep in mind, as they assist individuals, that they must promote personal responsibility. Individuals are responsible

for themselves. When individuals are not capable of providing for themselves, immediate family, as well as extended family, have an obligation and opportunity to assist.

3. Sustain life not lifestyle.

We use the little phrase, “sustain life but not lifestyle.” As we sustain life, Church assistance is designed to furnish food, clothing, and appropriate shelter as well as other assistance, as determined by the bishop, needed to help the individual become self-reliant. Individuals are expected to use any assets they have for their support and in an orderly way downsize to accommodate their budget restraints.

4. Provide commodities before cash.

Another basic principle that we generally use is to provide commodities before we provide cash. When possible, the bishop provides members with commodities instead of giving them money or paying their bills. Where bishops’ storehouses are not available, fast offerings may be used to buy needed commodities.

5. Provide work and service opportunities.

One of the most important basic principles includes providing work and service opportunities. For individuals to retain their dignity during a time of personal distress, opportunities for service and work commensurate with the recipients’ circumstances should be found. The value of the work or service need not be equal to the assistance received but rather sufficient to avoid the evils of the dole and the fostering of an entitlement mentality. The ward council can assist by compiling and maintaining a list of meaningful work opportunities.

QUESTIONS FROM BISHOPS

With this short background presentation, let’s discuss some issues you would like to raise as they relate to your important stewardship of looking after and seeking out the poor.

Question: Recognizing that we, as bishops, have specific responsibilities for welfare assistance, are there

others to whom we may appropriately turn for help in that responsibility?

Response: The bishop has the opportunity to use a number of others in assisting in this responsibility. Particularly, members of the ward council, priesthood quorums, and the Relief Society all can help the bishop meet members' temporary and long-term welfare needs. These leaders are assisted by home teachers, visiting teachers, and others who have special skills.

Question: In regard to these welfare matters, how can I, as a bishop, better utilize my Relief Society and quorum leaders?

Response: Relief Society and quorum leaders can be extremely helpful in this whole process, and welfare should be central to the role of priesthood quorums and also the Relief Society. It should be a regularly discussed item in presidency meetings. Under the direction of the bishop, priesthood quorums and the Relief Society should help members find solutions to both short-term and long-term welfare needs and become self-reliant.

The Relief Society president holds a special place in this process. Normally, she assists the bishop by visiting members who need welfare assistance. She helps them assess their needs and suggests to the bishop what assistance to provide. The bishop and the Relief Society president may use the Needs and Resources Analysis form to assist them in determining those needs.

Question: Bishop Burton, how would you recommend that we teach the law of the fast so as to bring greater understanding to our members?

Response: The law of the fast is basic to the spiritual welfare of our Father in Heaven's children. He has established the law of the fast, and the law of tithing as well, to bless His people. The bishop should teach all members the importance of living these laws. He should also teach about the blessings the Lord promises for living these laws. These blessings include a closeness to the Lord, increased spiritual strength, temporal well-being, greater compassion, and a stronger desire to serve.

In some areas of the world, bishops' storehouses are available to help provide food and clothing. Where a bishops' storehouse is not available, fast offerings are used to provide food and clothing. They are also used to pay for shelter, medical assistance, and other life-sustaining aid.

There is no requirement, however, that fast-offering expenditures within the ward and stake remain in balance with fast-offering contributions.

Question: With the economy in the state that it is currently in, we are seeing an increased number of families and members struggling to meet mortgage payments. Is it permissible for us to use funds to assist with their mortgage payments?

Response: As you undoubtedly remember, welfare assistance is usually designed to be temporary. Bishops, along with quorum and Relief Society leaders, and other specialists if needed, should help recipients design a plan to become self-reliant so they will no longer need welfare assistance.

If a payment of a mortgage in the short run will enable them to carry out their plan to become self-reliant, then payment of a mortgage could be very desirable and permissible.

Question: Is it appropriate if an individual is receiving governmental welfare assistance to use Church welfare assistance as well?

Response: Members may choose to use resources in the community, including government resources, to meet their basic needs. The bishop should become familiar with these resources. Resources that are often used include:

- Hospitals, physicians, or other sources of medical aid.
- Job training and placement services, where available in the community.
- Help for people with disabilities.
- Professional counselors or social workers. Most every community has counselors or social workers who share our values.
- Addiction-recovery resources, which are more broadly available than ever before.

When Church members receive assistance from non-Church sources, the bishop may also give Church assistance and should help members avoid becoming dependent in any way on these sources. Where possible, members should work in return for assistance received. We need to avoid the evils of the dole and the feeling of having some kind of entitlement.

Brothers and sisters, we have had the opportunity for just a few moments to discuss sacred principles relating to helping and assisting those who are in need. May the Lord bless each of you as you perform your role in reaching out to our Father in Heaven's children and displaying the capacity to love and the compassion that comes from service. I humbly pray the Lord's blessings to be upon you, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Way of the Lord



My brothers and sisters, how grateful I am to have the opportunity to speak to you concerning a subject that is very dear to my heart—namely, the welfare program of the Church.

SERVICE IN WELFARE PROJECTS

Situated somewhat off the beaten path in Salt Lake City, away from the crowd, is a well-known square. Here, in a quiet fashion, motivated by a Christlike love, workers serve one another after the divine plan of the Master. I speak of Welfare Square, sometimes known as the bishops' storehouse. At this central location and at numerous other sites throughout the world, fruits and vegetables are canned, and commodities are processed, labeled, stored, and distributed to those persons who are in need. There is no sign of government help nor the exchange of currency here, since only the signed order from an ordained bishop is honored.

I had the privilege during the period of 1950 through 1955 to preside as a bishop over 1,080 members situated in the central part of Salt Lake City. In the congregation were 84 widows and perhaps 40 families who were judged to be in need of welfare at varying times and to some extent.

Specific assignments were given to units of the Church, that the requirements of the needy might be met. In one ecclesiastical unit the Church members would produce beef, in another oranges, in another

vegetables or wheat—even a variety of staples, that the storehouses might be filled and the elderly and needy supplied. The Lord provided the way when He declared, “And the storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and the widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor” (D&C 83:6). Then the reminder, “But it must needs be done in mine own way” (D&C 104:16).

In the vicinity where I lived and served, we operated a poultry project. Most of the time it was an efficiently operated project supplying to the storehouse thousands of dozens of fresh eggs and hundreds of pounds of dressed poultry. On a few occasions, however, the experience of being volunteer city farmers provided not only blisters on the hands but frustration of heart and mind.

For instance, I shall ever remember the time we gathered together the teenaged Aaronic Priesthood young men to really give the poultry project a spring cleaning treatment. Our enthusiastic and energetic throng gathered at the project and in a speedy fashion uprooted, gathered, and burned large quantities of weeds and debris. By the light of the glowing bonfires we ate hot dogs and congratulated ourselves on a job well done. The project was now neat and tidy. However, there was just one disastrous problem. The noise and the fires had so disturbed the fragile and temperamental population of 5,000 laying hens that most of them went into a sudden molt and ceased laying. Thereafter we tolerated a few weeds that we might produce more eggs.

No member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who has canned peas, topped beets, hauled hay, shoveled coal or helped in any way to serve others ever forgets or regrets the experience of helping provide for those in need. Devoted men and women help to operate this vast and inspired welfare program. In reality, the plan would never succeed on effort alone, for this program operates through faith after the way of the Lord.

MOTIVATED BY FAITH

Sharing with others that which we have is not new to our generation. We need but to turn to the account found in 1 Kings in the Holy Bible to appreciate anew

the principle that when we follow the counsel of the Lord, when we care for those in need, the outcome benefits all. There we read that a most severe drought had gripped the land. Famine followed. Elijah the prophet received from the Lord what to him must have been an amazing instruction: “Get thee to Zarephath . . . : behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.” When he had found the widow, Elijah declared:

“Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

“And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.”

Her response described her pathetic situation as she explained that she was preparing a final and scanty meal for her son and for herself, and then they would die.

How implausible to her must have been Elijah’s response:

“Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

“For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

“And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

“And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail” (1 Kings 17:9–11, 13–16).

This is the faith that has ever motivated and inspired the welfare plan of the Lord.

THE TRUE FAST

As we fast one day each month and contribute generously to a fast-offering fund at least the equivalent of the meals forfeited, may we remember the words of Isaiah as he described the true fast:

“Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

“Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy [reward].

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . .

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (Isaiah 58:7–9, 11).

Our sacred fast offerings finance the operation of storehouses, supply cash needs of the poor, and provide medical care for the sick who are without funds.

Of course, in many areas the fast offerings are collected each month by the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, generally quite early on the Sabbath day. I recall that the boys in the congregation over which I presided had assembled one morning, sleepy eyed, a bit disheveled, and mildly complaining about arising so early to fulfill their assignment. Not a word of reproof was spoken, but during the following week, we escorted the boys to Welfare Square for a guided tour. They saw firsthand a lame person operating the telephone switchboard, an older man stocking shelves, women arranging clothing to be distributed—even a blind person placing labels on cans. Here were individuals earning their sustenance through their contributed labors. A penetrating silence came over the boys as they witnessed how their efforts each month helped to collect the sacred fast-offering funds which aided the needy and provided employment for those who otherwise would be idle.

From that hallowed day forward, there was no urging required. On fast Sunday mornings they were present at 7:00, dressed in their Sunday best, anxious to do their duty as holders of the Aaronic Priesthood. No longer were they simply distributing and collecting envelopes. They were helping to provide food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless—all after the way of the Lord. Their smiles were more frequent, their pace more eager. Perhaps now they better understood the classic passage, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

A MIRACLE OF LOVE

One might ask, concerning those who assist in the welfare program, What prompts such devotion on the part of every worker? The answer can be stated simply: An individual testimony of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, even a heartfelt desire to love the Lord with all one's heart, mind, and soul, and one's neighbor as oneself.

This is what motivated a personal friend, now deceased, who was in the produce business, to telephone me during those days as a bishop and say, "I'm sending to the storehouse a semitruck and trailer filled with citrus fruits for those who would otherwise go without. Let the storehouse management know the truck is coming, and there will be no charge; but, Bishop, no one is to know who sent it." Rarely have I seen the joy and appreciation this generous act brought forth. Never have I questioned the eternal reward to which that unnamed benefactor has now gone.

Such kind deeds of generosity are not a rarity but are frequently found. Beneath the heavily traveled freeway which girds Salt Lake City there once stood the home of an elderly single man named Louis, who, due to a crippling disease, had never known a day without pain nor many days without loneliness. One winter's day as I visited him, he was slow in answering the doorbell's ring. I entered his well-kept home; the temperature in save but one room, the kitchen, was a chilly 40 degrees. The reason: not sufficient money to heat any other room. The walls needed papering, the ceilings to be lowered, the cupboards to be filled.

I was troubled by the experience of visiting my friend. A bishop was consulted, and a miracle of love, prompted by testimony, took place. The ward members were organized, the labor of love begun. A month later, my friend Louis called and asked if I would come and see what had happened to him. I did and indeed beheld a miracle. The sidewalks, which had been uprooted by large poplar trees, had been replaced, the porch of the home rebuilt, a new door with glistening hardware installed, the ceilings lowered, the walls papered, the woodwork painted, the roof replaced, and the cupboards filled. No longer

was the home chilly and uninviting. It now seemed to whisper a warm welcome.

Lou saved until last showing me his pride and joy: there on his bed was a beautiful plaid quilt bearing the crest of his McDonald family clan. It had been made with loving care by the women of the Relief Society. Before leaving, I discovered that each week the young adults were bringing in a hot dinner and sharing a home evening. Warmth had replaced the cold. Repairs had transformed the wear of years. But more significantly, hope had dispelled despair, and now love reigned triumphant.

All who participated in this moving drama of real life had discovered a new and personal appreciation of the Master's teaching, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

To all within the sound of my voice I declare that the welfare plan of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is inspired of Almighty God. Indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ is its architect. He beckons to you and to me, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

May we hear His voice, may we open to His presence the doorways of our hearts, and may He be our constant companion as we strive to serve His children, I pray humbly in His holy name, even Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.



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