
First Presidency Message

“And the Lord Called His People Zion”

By President Spencer W. Kimball

This important address was delivered at the October 1977 general conference. At the direction of the President, it is reprinted for renewed individual and family study.

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Because of the overriding significance of the great welfare plan, I thought it appropriate to restate the fundamental truths of this work and to emphasize how we should apply these in this generation. My hope is that we may intensify, if possible, our spiritual heritage in this work and building on their foundation, lengthen our stride in its present implementation.

Since the first dispensation of time on this earth the Lord has required his people to love their neighbors as themselves. Of Enoch’s generation we are told that “the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.

“And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.” (**Moses 7:17-18.**)

All through the Book of Mormon we see leaders teaching and generations learning this truth as spoken by that benevolent king, Benjamin:

“And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your 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.**)

In Fourth Nephi we witness the blessings of the Nephites as they subdue selfishness and prosper in perfect righteousness for four generations. Who does not thrill to this picture of the ideal of Zion?

“And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift

“And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.” (**4 Ne. 1:3, 4 Ne. 1:16.**)

It is now nearly four generations ago in this, the last dispensation, that the Lord again laid down his precepts for modern Zion when he said:

“And let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practise virtue and holiness before me.

“And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself.

“For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: 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 38:24-27.**)

President Joseph F. Smith foreshadowed the reestablishment of welfare work in 1900 when he reminded us:

“You must continue to bear in mind that the temporal and the 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 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 Co.)

Thus you can see that when in 1936 the First Presidency reenunciated these precepts in the form of the present-day welfare plan, they were merely extending to that generation a more complete opportunity for establishing the ideal of Zion. In this generation their words may have even deeper meaning.

“Our primary purpose,” said the First Presidency, “was to set up, in so far as it might be possible, 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. Work is to be reenthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership.” (General Conference, October 1936.)

There is no mistaking their intent; and while often seen as temporal in nature, clearly this work is spiritual at heart! It is people-centered and God-inspired and, as President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., put it, “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 fruition the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this Church.” (President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., special meeting of stake presidencies, October 2, 1936.)

As we travel and visit the people throughout the world, we recognize the great temporal needs of our people. And as we long to help them, we realize the vital importance of their learning this great lesson: that the highest achievement of spirituality comes as we conquer the flesh. We build character as we encourage people to care for their own needs.

As givers gain control of their desires and properly see others’ needs in light of their own wants, then the powers of the gospel are released in their lives. They learn that by adopting the principle of love they ensure not only temporal salvation but also spiritual sanctification.

And as a recipient receives with thanksgiving, he rejoices in knowing that in its purest form—in the true Zion—one may partake of both temporal and spiritual salvation. Then they are motivated to become self-sustaining and able to share with others.

Isn’t the plan beautiful? Don’t you thrill to this part of the gospel that causes Zion to put on her beautiful garments? When viewed in this light, we can see that Welfare Services is not a program, but the essence of the gospel. *It is the gospel in action.*

It is the crowning principle of a Christian life.

So as to better visualize this process and firmly fix the specific principles that undergird this work, may I tell you what I believe are its foundational truths.

First is *love*. The measure of our love for our fellowman and, in a large sense, the measure of our love for the Lord, is what we do for one another and for the poor and distressed.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (**John 13:34-35**; see **Moro. 7:44-48** and **Luke 10:25-37, Luke 14:12-14.**)

Second is *service*. To serve is to humble oneself, to succor those in need of succor, and to impart of one’s “substance to the poor and the needy, feeding the hungry, and suffering all manner of afflictions, for Christ’s sake.” (**Alma 4:13.**)

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (**James 1:27.**)

Third is *work*. Work brings happiness, self-esteem, and prosperity. It is the means of all accomplishment; it is the opposite of idleness. We are commanded to work. (See **Gen. 3:19.**) Attempts to obtain our temporal, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being by means of a dole violate the divine mandate that we should work for what we receive. Work should be the ruling principle in the lives of our Church membership. (See **D&C 42:42; D&C 56:17; D&C 68:30-32; D&C 75:29.**)

Fourth is *self-reliance*. The Church and its members are commanded by the Lord to be self-reliant and independent. (See **D&C 78:13-14.**)

The responsibility for each person’s social, emotional, spiritual, physical, or economic well-being rests first upon himself, second

upon his family, and third upon the Church if he is a faithful member thereof.

No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able will voluntarily shift the burden of his own or his family's well-being to someone else. So long as he can, under the inspiration of the Lord and with his own labors, he will supply himself and his family with the spiritual and temporal necessities of life. (See **1 Tim. 5:8.**)

Fifth is *consecration*, which encompasses sacrifice. Consecration is the giving of one's time, talents, and means to care for those in need—whether spiritually or temporally—and in building the Lord's kingdom. In welfare programs, members consecrate as they labor on production projects, share their professional talents, give a generous fast offering, and respond to ward and quorum service projects. They consecrate their time in their home or visiting teaching. We consecrate when we give of ourselves. (See "The False Gods We Worship", International Magazines, August 1977.)

Sixth is *accountability*. Each member of the Church has a sacred spiritual or temporal trust for which there is accountability. Because all things belong to the Lord, we are held responsible for how we lead our families and use our bodies, minds, and properties. (See **D&C 104:11-15.**) A faithful servant is one who exercises righteous dominion, cares for his own, and looks to the poor and needy. (See **D&C 104:15-18.**)

These principles govern welfare services activities. May we all learn, obey, and teach these principles. Leaders, teach them to your members; fathers, teach them to your families. Only as we apply these truths can we approach the ideal of Zion.

Zion is a name given by the Lord to his covenant people, who are characterized by purity of heart and faithfulness in caring for the poor, the needy, and the distressed. (See **D&C 97:21.**)

"And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness: and there was no poor among them." (**Moses 7:18.**)

This highest order of the priesthood society is founded on the doctrines of love, service, work, self-reliance, and stewardship, all of which are circumscribed by the covenant of consecration.

May I turn now to some of the activities and programs that represent ways to live these principles.

As you know, in the recent past we have placed considerable emphasis on personal and family preparedness. I hope that each member of the Church is responding appropriately to this direction. I also hope that we are understanding and accentuating the positive and not the negative.

I like the way the Relief Society teaches personal and family preparedness as "provident living." This implies the husbanding of our resources, the wise planning of financial matters, full provision for personal health, and adequate preparation for education and career development, giving appropriate attention to home production and storage as well as the development of emotional resiliency.

I hope that we understand that, while having a garden, for instance, is often useful in reducing food costs and making available delicious fresh fruits and vegetables, it does much more than this. Who can gauge the value of that special visit between parents and children as they weed or water the garden? How do we evaluate the good that comes from the obvious lessons of planting, cultivating, and the eternal law of the harvest? And how do we measure the family togetherness and cooperating that must accompany successful home preparedness projects?

We speak of literacy and education in terms of being prepared for a better occupation, but we cannot underestimate the present pleasure of our reading in the scriptures, Church magazines, and good books of every kind. We teach of emotional strength in terms of family prayer, kind words, and full communication, but we quickly learn how pleasant life can be when it is lived in a courteous and reinforcing atmosphere.

In like manner we could refer to all the components of personal and family preparedness, not in relation to holocaust or disaster, but in cultivating a life-style that is on a day-to-day basis its own reward.

Let's do these things because they are right, because they are satisfying, and because we are obedient to the counsels of the Lord. In this spirit we will be prepared for most eventualities, and the Lord will prosper and comfort us. It is true that difficult times will come—for the Lord has foretold them—and, yes, stakes of Zion are "for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm." (**D&C 115:6.**) But if we live wisely and providently, we will be as safe as in the palm of His hand.

I hope that in our priesthood quorums and Relief Society meetings the concepts of personal and family preparedness are being properly taught and with the kind of positive approach that we all respond to.

Let's also teach our obligations relative to the law of the fast. Each member should contribute a generous fast offering for the care of the poor and the needy. This offering should at least be the value of the two meals not eaten while fasting.

"Sometimes we have been a bit penurious and figured that we had for breakfast one egg and that cost so many cents and then we give that to the Lord. I think that when we are affluent, as many of us are, that we ought to be very, very generous. ...

"I think we should ... give, instead of the amount saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much more—ten times more when we are in a position to do it." (General Conference, October 1974.)

Fast offerings have long constituted the means from which the needs of the Lord's poor have been provided. It has been, and now is, the desire and objective of the Church to obtain from fast offerings the necessary funds to meet the cash needs of the welfare program, and to obtain from welfare production projects the commodity needs. If we give a generous fast offering, we shall increase our own prosperity both spiritually and temporally.

Brothers and sisters, with these thoughts in mind may I urge you to go forward in this great work. So much depends upon our willingness to make up our minds, collectively and individually, that present levels and performance are not acceptable, either to ourselves or the Lord.

Let us learn our lessons well. Let us emulate the Savior in our lives by serving and consecrating, by overcoming temporally so that we might more fully achieve spiritually.

If we all so labor, then it will eventually be written of us that "surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God."

Gospel topics: preparation, welfare, Zion

Ideas for Home Teachers

Some Points of Emphasis. You may wish to make these points in your home teaching discussion:

1. The measure of our love for our fellowman and, in a large sense, for the Lord, is what we do for one another and for the poor and distressed.
2. Work brings happiness, self-esteem, and prosperity. It is the means of all accomplishment. We are commanded to work.
3. The responsibility for each member's social, emotional, spiritual, physical, or economic well-being rests first upon himself, second upon his family, and third upon the Church.
4. Consecration encompasses sacrifice. It is the giving of one's time, talents, and means to care for those in need—whether spiritually or temporally—and in building the Lord's kingdom.
5. Each member should contribute a generous fast offering for the care of the poor and the needy. If we do, we shall increase our own prosperity both spiritually and temporally.

Discussion Helps

1. Relate your personal feelings about the fundamental principles of welfare services. Ask family members to share their feelings.
2. Are there some quotations in this article that the family might read aloud and discuss?
3. Would this discussion be better after talking with the head of the household before the visit? Is there a message from the quorum leader or bishop to the household head concerning self reliance?