

going to spend the rest of my life there."

And my wish for each one of you is that you may spend your eternal life in the celestial kingdom of God. Then you may say, "My heart hath had its greatest experience." And that it may be so, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

Elder Franklin D. Richards

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My dear brothers and sisters, I feel it both a privilege and a blessing to be present at this inspirational conference, and I know that the answers to many of today's problems are to be found in the messages being given by our leaders.

Regardless of the difficulties existing in the world today, we as a people must recognize that we have been blessed abundantly with the resources of this world; yet we know that whatever we have is the Lord's and that He has blessed us with these things to see how we will use them.

The gift of life

I think it might be said, Life is God's greatest gift to man, and what we do with our life is our gift to God.

President Brigham Young, in referring to making our life a gift to God, had this to say: "Our religion is worth everything to us and for it we should be willing to employ our time, our talent, our means, our energies, our lives." (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, p. 119.)

And, "If we do right, there will be an eternal increase among this people in talent, strength and intellect, and earthly wealth, from this time, henceforth, and forever." (*JD*, vol. 1, p. 110.)

"No blessing that is sealed upon us will do us any good unless we live for it." (*JD*, vol. 11, p. 117.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith

We will now hear from Elder Franklin D. Richards, Assistant to the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve.

The use of wealth

It is interesting to note that here, as elsewhere in the scriptures, promises of earthly wealth and increased talents are made to those who live the gospel principles, and counsel is given to use our talents and wealth for the building of the kingdom. Many scriptures, however, contain words of admonition regarding temptations brought about through the acquisition of wealth and its use for unrighteous purposes.

The great apostle Paul, in writing to his beloved associate Timothy, told him that "the love of money is the root of all evil," and to "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute. . . ." (1 Tim. 6:10, 17-18.)

Principles of industry and thrift

Throughout the history of the Church its leaders have taught the value of the principles of work, industry, and thrift; and as they have been practiced, Church members have prospered in numerous ways. Likewise, members have been counseled to establish and maintain their economic independence, and employment-creating industries have been encouraged.

In furtherance of these teachings, every man who has property and means should live so as to obtain wisdom to know how to use them in the best possible way to produce the greatest amount of good for himself, for his family, for his fellowmen, and for the kingdom of God.

Again quoting from President Young: "When this people are prepared to properly use the riches of this world for the building up of the Kingdom of God, He is ready and willing to bestow them upon us. I like to see men get rich by their industry, prudence, management and economy, and then devote it to the building up of the Kingdom of God upon the earth." (*JD*, vol. 2, pp. 114-15.)

Carnegie's attitude toward wealth

Andrew Carnegie, one of this country's great philanthropists, stated his attitude toward wealth as follows: "This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth: First, to set an example of modesty, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community—the man of wealth thus becoming the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves." (*The Gospel of Wealth*.)

With this philosophy of wealth in mine, one might properly say, "What I am worth is what I am doing for other people."

In many respects the real test of a man is his attitude toward his earthly possessions.

Building God's kingdom

In line with this thinking, our business, then, should be to build the kingdom of God. Many of us have said, in our more generous and unselfish moments, "If I only had the wealth, I would build a beautiful church, provide a school for underprivileged children, supply a hospital where it is needed, etc."

Probably few of us will have the great wealth needed to do any of these things by ourselves; nevertheless, each of us, as we have the desire, can have a share in such wonderful projects by our contributions, including the payment of our tithes and offerings.

Tithes and offerings

Throughout the ages the Lord has commanded his people to remember the needy and to pay tithes and offerings for the purpose of building the kingdom.

In this dispensation the Lord has revealed to us that "it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people." (D&C 64:23.) I think it should be noted that a very substantial number are today honestly meeting this requirement. Yet, on the other hand, many are negligent in the payment of their tithes and offerings.

The Lord has said: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . . ."

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3:8, 10.)

Tithes are sacred funds, and the Lord in this dispensation has revealed that tithing "shall be disposed of by a council, composed of the First Presidency of my Church, and of the bishop and his council, . . . and by mine own voice unto them, saith the Lord." (D&C 120:1.)

Financial requirements

With the accelerated growth of the Church throughout the world, more and more buildings and facilities are required—chapels, schools, seminaries, temples, hospitals, mission homes, visitors centers, and many other buildings.

Not only does the construction of these new church facilities require the expenditure of large sums of capital, but the operation and maintenance of these buildings become heavy financial responsibilities.

The Church is designed to take care of the spiritual and temporal needs of its members, both living and dead; and the pattern encompasses programs such as educational, missionary, welfare, auxiliary, social services, genealogical, and many others. These programs functioning on a worldwide basis likewise require great financial assistance.

We have been looking to this day for more than one hundred years, and I am sure that as we keep the commandments of the Lord, he will open up the way whereby we can meet the financial obligations relative to the growth and development of the Church, as well as our own responsibilities.

A cheerful giver

The apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Saints, told them that "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. . . .

"Let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:6-7.)

In this dispensation the Lord has said, "Thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely." (D&C 19:26.)

As we consider ourselves trustees of wealth for the benefit of God's children, we should not worship property, whether it be of great or small value.

If we are guilty of worshipping property, then we have need to repent and straighten out our values.

A person who places the wealth of this world in the scales against the things of God evidences little understanding of eternal values.

The privilege of giving

We talk about making sacrifices to build the kingdom of God, but the word to me is a misnomer—to be able to participate in building the kingdom is a great privilege and blessing.

Recently I dedicated a beautiful little chapel, and at that time I was told that in order to pay the balance of the ward's share of the construction cost (\$5,000), the bishop had asked all members to limit Christmas presents to small children and to donate the amount thus saved to the building fund. The members responded beautifully, considering this an opportunity to receive a blessing rather than as a sacrifice, and at the dedicatory service many bore witness to this effect.

The widow's mite

As long as one is honest with the Lord, the amount paid is not material. The widow's or child's mite is as important and acceptable as the rich man's offerings. When men, women, and children are honest with God and pay their tithes and offerings, the Lord gives them wisdom whereby they can do as much or more with the remainder than they could if they had not been honest with the Lord. Many times they are blessed and prospered in various ways—spiritually, physically, and mentally, as well as materially. I bear my witness to you that this is true, and I am sure that many of you can bear such a testimony.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35.)

The purpose of riches

What are riches for, then? To be used in doing good. Therefore, let us dedicate our means to the building of the kingdom of God. Let us this day resolve to be honest with the Lord in the payment of our tithes and offerings.

I know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and this is far more important than earthly riches.

And I know that the gospel in its fullness has been restored in this dispensation through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that there is a living prophet at the head of the Church today, President Joseph

Fielding Smith. This is likewise of more value than any amount of earthly wealth.

However, a testimony alone will not save us. It is the keeping of the commandments of God—living the life of a true Latter-day Saint. It is important, then, to appreciate that the gospel has to be lived in order to be fully realized and its power received.

Therefore, let us dispense the means which the Lord has given us to enrich the lives of others who are less fortunate than we are and to build the kingdom of God, that we may make of our life a good gift to God, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

Elder Mark E. Petersen

Of the Council of the Twelve

Three great civilizations have occupied the Western Hemisphere. Two have passed into oblivion.

Those that disappeared died by virtual suicide. They brought about their own extinction as they defiled the land and defied their God by extensive crime, sexual deviation, and other loathsome sins of almost every kind.

Resemblance in degradation

Now our modern nations have succeeded them in the occupancy of this hemisphere. Much of the corruption which is common among us today resembles in striking detail the degradation that afflicted them.

In most of the Americas, for example, we have an advancing crime rate which is staggering, to say the least, reaching an annual cost to the public or more than 40 billion dollars in the United States alone.

Our moral collapse is appalling, but surprisingly, many attempt to justify it. Within recent weeks one of the highest officials of a leading Chris-

tian denomination publicly announced that he favors premarital relationships between young people, and his speech was carried internationally by the Associated Press.

Social diseases

Because of promiscuity, the dreaded social diseases have reached the epidemic stage. One health official said that actually they have surpassed epidemic proportions, and he called the condition a plague. These social diseases now affect more people than any communicable disease except the common cold.

In one of our best known western cities health officials estimate that one in every ten persons between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five has a venereal disease. It is almost unbelievable.

The *International Herald Tribune* recently said that easy abortion has now removed the stigma from immorality, making free sex even freer still.