

ing is similar to that of the law of revenue which is enacted by every state, every country, and every municipality in the world, I suppose. There is no such thing as an organization of men for any purpose of importance, without provisions for carrying out its designs. The law of tithing is the law of revenue for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Without it, it would be impossible to carry on the purposes of the Lord." (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, p. 226.)

### Mary Fielding Smith's example

Time will not permit me to tell you in detail a beautiful story on tithing told by my uncle, President Joseph F. Smith. It concerns an experience his mother, Mary Fielding Smith, the widow of Patriarch Hyrum Smith, had after she came into the Salt Lake Valley. It is heart-warming and faith promoting. She said to a man at the tithing office, across the street where the Hotel Utah now stands, who chided her for paying tithing: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing, I should expect the Lord to withhold his blessings from me. I pay my tithing, not only because it is a law of God, but because I expect a blessing by doing it. By keeping this and other laws, I expect to prosper, and to be able to provide for my family."

I would recommend that all of you read the full story in the book

*Gospel Doctrine*, a selection of President Smith's writings and sermons, pages 228, 229, and 230.

### Tithing required of God's followers

My brethren and sisters, again I say, tithing is a law of God and is required of his followers. To fail to meet this obligation in full is to omit a weighty matter. It is a transgression, not an inconsequential oversight.

Brethren and sisters, the law of tithing is a divine commandment and applies to all the children of our Heavenly Father. All who believe the Bible ought to believe that it is a law of God. But none understand it and live it like the Latter-day Saints attempt to live it, because it has been renewed to us by modern-day prophets.

There echo again and again the words of the Master: "Render . . . unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).

I bear my testimony, brothers and sisters, and witness to the divinity of this important law of the Lord and pray our Heavenly Father to bless you and all the Saints with that same testimony and leave my blessings with you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Spencer W. Kimball

We shall now be pleased to hear from Presiding Bishop Victor L. Brown.

## Bishop Victor L. Brown

My dear brothers and sisters, my message this morning is one of deep concern.

You will recall that ancient Israel was kept wandering in the wilderness for forty years before the

people were prepared to cross over Jordan and enter the promised land. For over forty years we as a people have been taught the importance of personal and family preparedness. We have been taught that the first

responsibility for our welfare rests upon our own shoulders and then upon our families. Only when these resources fail do we have call upon the Church. Yet, in recent months, it has been increasingly evident that there are many who are not prepared.

Within the last twelve months, the distribution of fast offerings and commodities by the bishops has been alarming. At the present rate of demand, the Church resources will be almost expended in a short time. As a matter of fact, some commodities have already been depleted, and this when the evidence is that the recession will be of a short duration. It would appear that in altogether too many cases the teachings about preparedness have been either misunderstood or knowingly rejected. Many of our members appear to feel that when difficulty comes, the Church will come to their aid, even when they could have prepared themselves had their priorities been appropriate.

### Contrasting priorities

Some time ago while visiting two stakes, I saw the evidence of the point I am trying to make. Both stakes were in predominantly Latter-day Saint communities. Both were affected seriously by the same severe but temporary disruption of employment. Generally, when I arrive in a new community for stake conference, I drive around the neighborhood or countryside to get a feel for the kind of people who live there. For example: Are their yards well taken care of? Are their homes well cared for? Are there old dilapidated barns and outbuildings, or are the properties neatly maintained and fenced? In other words, how much pride do the people have in themselves and their community?

In the first stake I refer to, I saw well-cared-for homes and yards. It seemed that this was a prosperous, so-called middle-class area. Some

would have thought it an affluent area from the number of recreation vehicles in the driveways—boats, campers, and motor homes. As I met with the stake presidency, I commented on the apparent prosperity of the people. However, when reviewing the welfare needs of the people, I was shocked to see the demands made on the fast-offering funds and the bishops' storehouse.

The stake president informed me that within a week or two of the closing down of the major employer, many families came to their bishops for assistance. They had very limited reserves from which to take care of themselves. He also mentioned there were some faithful members in his stake who from their reserves had taken care of their own needs as well as assisting some of their neighbors.

In the second stake, which was some distance from the first but which was impacted heavily by the same employment problem, I saw few recreation vehicles. As a matter of fact, I saw little evidence of affluence, although the properties were neat and tidy. Here I was surprised to see practically no fast offerings or bishop's orders being used.

I asked the stake president if his bishops understood and were discharging their responsibilities for the poor and those in need. He indicated that, while some families had needed to seek assistance from their bishops, most of the members recognized their responsibility for their own welfare and were prepared to take care of themselves.

You see, the priorities of the members of these two stakes were very different. Many in the first stake were not prepared and expected the Church to take care of them, while in the second stake the situation was reversed—the majority of the people had prepared to meet their own needs.

May I also share some individual examples which are indicative of a growing problem?

### **Improper planning**

A few months ago a young couple decided to cancel their health insurance. They felt they just could not afford it. The high cost of graduate school, in a time of rampant inflation, led them to disregard the counsel of the Brethren. Then came a baby—premature, with serious complications resulting in incredibly expensive care. Heartsick and frightened, they turned first to their families, who responded with substantial help. That not being nearly enough, they then turned to their bishop, who, from the fast offerings, supplied additional help. They would have been almost self-sustaining had they retained their insurance.

A young man decided that trade school was too demanding and too expensive. He dropped out of school, got married, and took a low-paying job in a grocery store. When a baby came, he found that his income was not adequate even for the family's basic needs. Too embarrassed to approach his parents, he turned to his bishop for help.

Another family chose Monday night sports on television in preference to family home evening. For weeks and months there was no family prayer, no gospel discussions, no reading of the scriptures, no other meaningful family activities. Now a teenage daughter has run away from home, and the parents have turned to the bishop for help.

### **Importance of personal and family preparedness**

In each of these examples, the central problem could probably have been avoided if the members had applied the principles of personal and family preparedness. The principles apply universally to all members of the Church all over the world, notwithstanding the fact that the full welfare services program is not in

place in most countries outside the United States and Canada. We recognize there may be legal restrictions in some countries on certain phases of the program. Nevertheless, our people should follow these teachings to the extent the law allows.

I implore you stake leaders to see that the messages of this welfare services meeting get to the bishops, the quorum leaders, and the ward Relief Society presidents so that the members of the Church can be taught and converted sufficiently to live the basic principles of which we speak and thus put their houses in order (see D&C 90:18).

The bishop is responsible to administer to the needs of the poor and needy. He determines who will receive assistance and in what form that assistance will be. His judgment is basic to the wise administration of this program. He determines whether it blesses the people or becomes simply a dole. He also is responsible to see that no one who should properly be helped is overlooked.

Earlier I indicated that these principles have been taught for forty years. As a matter of fact, as President Kimball said, they have been taught for a much longer period of time. President Brigham Young, in remarks given in the Mill Creek Ward on July 25, 1868, had this to say, among other things:

'I believe the Latter-day Saints are the best people on the earth of whom we have any knowledge. Still, I believe that we are, in many things, very negligent, slothful and slow to obey the words of the Lord. Many seem to act upon the faith that God will sustain us instead of our trying to sustain ourselves. We are frightened at seeing the grasshoppers coming and destroying our crops. . . . I remember saying in the School of the Prophets, that I would rather the people would exercise a little more sense and save means to provide for themselves, instead of squandering it

away and asking the Lord to feed them. In my reflections I have carried this matter a considerable length. I have paid attention to the counsel that has been given me. For years past it has been sounded in my ears, year after year, to lay up grain, so that we might have an abundance in the day of want. Perhaps the Lord would bring a partial famine on us; perhaps a famine would come upon our neighbors. I have been told that He might bring just such a time as we are now having. But suppose I had taken no heed to this counsel, and had not regarded the coming time, what would have been my condition to-day.

"View the actions of the Latter-day Saints on this matter, and their neglect of the counsel given; and suppose the Lord would allow these insects to destroy our crops this season and the next, what would be the result? I can see death, misery and want on the faces of this people. But some may say, 'I have faith the Lord will turn them away.' What ground have we to hope this? Have I any good reason to say to my Father in heaven, 'Fight my battles,' when He has given me the sword to wield, the arm and the brain that I can fight for myself? Can I ask Him to fight my battles and sit quietly down waiting for Him to do so? I cannot. I can pray the people to hearken to wisdom, to listen to counsel; but to ask God to do for me that which I can do for myself is preposterous to my mind. Look at the Latter-day Saints. We have had our fields laden with grain for years; and if we had been so disposed, our bins might have been filled to overflowing, and with seven years' provisions on hand we might have disregarded the ravages of these insects, and have gone to the canyon and got our lumber, procured the materials, and built up and beautified our places, instead of devoting our time to fighting and endeavoring to replace that which has been lost

through their destructiveness. We might have made our fences, improved our buildings, beautified Zion, let our ground rest, and prepared for the time when these insects would have gone. But now the people are running distracted here and there. . . . They are in want and in trouble, and they are perplexed. They do not know what to do. They have been told what to do, but they did not hearken to this counsel." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 12:240-41.)

President Young goes on to say: "We must learn to listen to the whispering of the Holy Spirit, and the counsels of the servants of God, until we come to the unity of the faith. If we had obeyed counsel we would have had granaries today, and they would have been full of grain; and we would have had wheat and oats and barley for ourselves and for our animals, to last us for years." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 12:241.)

Quoting further from President Young: "When Moses was on the mount they [the Israelites] went to Aaron and inquired where Moses was, and demanded gods to go before them. And Aaron told them to bring him their ear rings and their jewelry, and they did so, and he made of them a golden calf; and the people ran around it, and said these be the gods which brought us out of the land of Egypt. How much credit was due to them? Just as much as to us, for not saving our grain when we had an abundance, and, when grasshoppers come, crying, 'Lord turn them away and save us.' It is just as consistent as for a man on board a steamboat on the wide ocean to say, 'I will show you what faith I have, and then to jump overboard, crying, 'Lord save me.' It may not seem so daring; but is it any more inconsistent than to throw away and waste the substance the Lord has given us, and when we come to want, crying to Him for what we have wasted and squandered? The Lord has been

blessing us all the time, and He asks us why we have not been blessing ourselves." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 12:243.)

I do not want to leave the impression that nothing has been done. There are those faithful Saints who have their year's supply and are taking care of themselves. They know of that peace which comes from being obedient and being prepared. From letters we receive, we know that many other families are planting gardens and working toward their year's supply of food, clothing, and other necessities. Some parents are striving to get the whole family involved in temporal welfare.

One recent letter reads: "I am over our food storage at home. I'm ten years old. I would like your manual called 'Home Storage and Production.' If you can send me any other information I'd like that too. [Signed] Travis Leal"

Our concern and the thrust of my message, which has been repeated from this pulpit many times, is that the welfare program rests on the basic principle of personal and family preparedness, not on Church preparedness. We are concerned that because the Church program includes production projects, canneries, bishops' storehouses, Desert Industries, and other visible activities, our people are mistakenly led to believe these things replace the need for them to provide for themselves. This simply is not so. The evidence that this illusion exists is seen in the experience of the last few months as the draw on fast offerings and storehouse commodities has spiraled.

### Difficult times

We are very much aware that we live in difficult times, perhaps as difficult as any recent period in history. The economy in general seems to be out of control; there is high unemployment in many areas. In-

flation is running rampant in most countries of the world. Personal debt is staggering. It seems almost impossible for young people to buy a home. Many who have purchased a home have monthly payments which leave no room to handle the slightest emergency.

We have been taught that we should build our reserves over a period of time, that we should not go into debt to do so, that we should buy those things we use and use them on a rotation basis, that we should use common sense in preparing ourselves to be independent and self-reliant. There has never been extremism or fanaticism associated with these teachings. I fear we today are somewhat like those referred to by President Brigham Young in this quotation:

"We have seen one grasshopper war before this. Then we had two years of it. We are having two years now. Suppose we have good crops next year, the people will think less of this visitation than they do now; and still less the next year; until in four or five years it will be almost gone from their minds. We are capable of being perfectly independent of these insects. If we had thousands on thousands of bushels of wheat, rye, and barley, and corn we might have said to them, [that is, the insects] 'you may go, we are not going to plant for you.' Then we could have plowed up the ground, put in the manure, and let the land rest, and the grasshoppers would not have destroyed the fruits of our labors which could have been directed to the beautifying of Zion and making our habitations places of loveliness." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 12:242.)

### "Prepare every needful thing"

My brothers and sisters, I feel our anxieties are justified. It is the opinion of many that more difficult times lie ahead. We are deeply con-

cerned about the welfare of our people and recognize the potential privation and suffering that will exist if each person and family does not accept the word of the Lord when he says, "Prepare every needful thing" (D&C 88:119), and "It must needs be done in mine own way" (D&C 104:16).

May I again implore you priesthood and Relief Society leaders to see that all members of the Church everywhere understand the responsi-

bility they have for their own welfare, that our people will be blessed to live provident and righteous lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Spencer W. Kimball

We have just listened to Bishop Victor L. Brown.

He will now be followed by Bishop J. Richard Clarke and by Sister Barbara B. Smith, General President of the Relief Society.

## Bishop J. Richard Clarke

### Straightforward counsel

My dear brothers and sisters, the greatest test for any generation is how it responds to the voice of the prophets. Our prophets have admonished us to—

1. Increase our personal righteousness.
2. Live within our means and get out of debt.
3. Produce, can, and store enough food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel for one year.

This straightforward counsel has not been followed by all of you. Some have believed and complied; others have waited until they could be sure the storm clouds were really gathering; and still others have rejected the counsel.

There was once a group of villagers who instructed their young shepherd, "When you see a wolf, cry 'Wolf! Wolf!' and we'll come with guns and pitchforks."

The next day the boy was tending his sheep when he saw a mountain lion in the distance. He cried out, "Lion! Lion!" But no one came. The lion killed several sheep. The boy was distressed: "Why didn't you come when I yelled?"

"There are no lions in this part of the country," they replied. "It is wolves that we are afraid of."

The young shepherd learned a very valuable lesson:

*People respond only to what they are prepared to believe.* The Brethren hesitate sometimes to talk in bold terms regarding the realities of the economy and the need for individual and family preparedness. Such talk is interpreted by the black-cloud watchers as a time of general calamity, and many stampede to the grocery stores to get ahead of the hoarders.

In April 1976 Bishop Featherstone suggested a one-year goal for members to store a year's supply of food. Some of those who had not yet begun a home storage program rushed out and plunged deeply into debt to buy hundreds of dollars of groceries. They then sat back, as did the Prophet Jonah, to see what was going to happen to Nineveh: It was as if Brother Featherstone had officially set doomsday as April 1, 1977. This was not his intention. The Lord's way has always been an orderly preparation, not one of second-guessing, confusion, and panic.

### Fallen civilizations

Let us be wise stewards. Let us ponder the lessons of history and profit from the experiences of those