

Elder Loren C. Dunn

Charity, forgiveness, and respect

There is a quality that can be seen in the lives of most Christians and good men and women everywhere. It not only is demonstrated in their actions but also seems to be a part of their nature. It is a blend of charity, forgiveness, and respect; and it takes into account the realization that God stands at the helm and we are all His children. As a result of this, we have certain obligations to one another.

"Wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love" (2 Nephi 26:30). And the scriptures also teach us, "And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses" (Mosiah 26:31). This quality can be a part of a person's life without compromising principle or commitment to truth.

Joseph Smith respected all people

Not long ago, Father Paul Showalter of Nauvoo shared with us an interesting insight on the Prophet Joseph Smith that came from the early Catholic history of that area.

When the Saints began to settle in Nauvoo and surrounding areas, a French Catholic priest by the name of Father John Alleman, who lived in neighboring McDonough County, needed transportation to visit a sick parishioner. Joseph provided him with ferry service to cross the river and a carriage to his destination.

As an expression of respect, Joseph commented, "The priests attend to their people faithfully and mind their own business, whereas others are continually bothering the Latter-day Saints."

This quality of respect for others, no matter what their belief or religious affiliation, seems to have been a part of the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

He stood for truth and the restored gospel to his dying day, and he had no patience with those who were deliberately wicked or who tried to exercise unrighteous dominion over the Latter-day Saints or, for that matter, anyone else. Still he showed a respect and brotherly concern for others, no matter what their beliefs or their backgrounds, which in many ways was remarkable when one considers the persecution that both he and the early Saints underwent.

He said at one time that he was in possession of the quality of love, and we also read that if he could get the ear of his enemies, he was usually able to win them over. In his dealings with members and nonmembers, he was committed to a principle which can be found in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. . . .

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith" (121:41-42, 45).

Joseph Smith declared the doctrine of the Restoration with great power and force. And never once did he back away from an opportunity to proclaim the truth of this work. He was the forerunner of literally legions of missionaries who have gone throughout the world to proclaim the same truths. Nevertheless, he also said, "I never feel to force my doctrine upon any person; I rejoice to see prejudice give way to truth, and the traditions of men dispersed by the pure principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (*History of the Church*, 6:213).

In the closing days of his life, when Nauvoo was besieged with mobs and challenges both from within and without, he and Hyrum still took the time to write to a Mr. Tewkesbury in Boston, who had become disaffiliated with the Church, inviting him to be restored once again to fellowship. The letter says in part, "Feeling an ardent desire for the salvation of the souls of men, we . . . would, in the sincerity of men of God, advise you to be rebaptized by Elder Nickerson, one of the servants of God, that you may again receive the sweet influences of the Holy Ghost, and enjoy the fellowship of the Saints" (*History of the Church*, 6:427).

Invitation to come back

This same spirit can be found in the First Presidency letter of 1985, which said in part: "We are aware of some who are inactive, of others who have become critical and are prone to find fault, and of those who have been disfellowshipped or excommunicated because of serious transgressions.

"To all such we reach out in love. We are anxious to forgive in the spirit of Him who said: 'I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.'" (D&C 64:10.) ("Policies and Announcements," *Ensign*, Mar. 1986, p. 88). This letter is referred to as the invitation to come back.

Today we live in times of conflict, dissent, differences of opinion, charges, countercharges, disagreements. There is a need for us, perhaps more than ever before, to reach within ourselves and allow the quality of mutual respect, mingled with charity and forgiveness, to influence our actions with one another; to be able to disagree without becoming disagreeable; to lower our voices and build on common ground with the realization that once the storm has passed, we will still have to live with one another.

Senator Humphrey's bouquet of roses

While living in the East some years ago, I read of an experience that took place on the floor of the United States Senate. As I recall, a debate was taking place. The leader of the debate in one party was Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. The floor leader for the other party was Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine. As time went on, it was clear that Senator Humphrey's party would win.

On the morning of the vote, Senator Humphrey went out to his garden and cut some red roses. When Margaret Chase Smith arrived at her desk on the senate floor that morning, there was the bouquet of roses. This, of course, did not change Senator Smith's mind concerning the issues, but it was a gesture of respect and appreciation.

In our dealings with one another, no matter what our position might be, we need more roses—and, after Elder Faust's talk this morning, I suppose, roses without thorns.

Coach Sterling Harris of Tooele

I was raised in a community in the western valleys of Utah. The town, Tooele, was settled by pioneers. When precious ore deposits were discovered in the nearby mountains, people came in from southern and eastern Europe who had a different culture and different religious preferences. They came to work in the mines and at the smelter.

They settled just east of town and called their community New Town. From almost the beginning, there was division and suspicion and misunderstanding between the new residents, who brought with them their old-country customs, and the people of the more established community, who were mostly of pioneer stock. The two groups seldom mixed.

One year the high school hired a football coach fresh out of Utah State by the name of Sterling Harris. Coach Harris, as he came to be known, was outgoing and just a little irreverent. He went throughout the old town and the new town and made sure he got all the boys in school and then out for football. He had a nickname for everyone, and after a while it became a sort of status symbol to carry a Sterling Harris nickname.

It wasn't long after that before he had the Gowns and the Whitehouses lined up next to the Savages and the Stepics, and the Ormes and the Melinkoviches running from the same backfield. He was tough but impartial, and he had about him a presence that made people feel important and want to do their best.

The team came together, and Coach Harris even took them to more than one state championship. But what was more important, in bringing the team together he brought the whole community together. Walls were broken down; people from diverse cultures learned they could build on mutual respect and appreciation. Sterling Harris had become a bridge.

Sterling Harris still lives in Tooele; he is ninety-one years of age. He went on to accomplish many other things in his life, including being superintendent of schools and a leader in the Church, but none was more important than helping a community to unite itself and reestablish the principle of respect for others of different backgrounds and cultures.

In the cities of this world, in the towns, in the neighborhoods, in the homes, we need more Sterling Harris from every walk of life.

Mutual respect can resolve problems

Robert Frost once wrote:

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall.
["Mending Wall"]

People will always have opposing views, and I suppose there will always be conflict and even misunderstanding. But the principle of mutual respect mixed with charity and forgiveness can lay the foundation for the resolving of differences and the solving of problems.

Was it not the Savior, speaking of the first and great commandment, who said that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and that the second is like unto it, that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves? (see Matthew 22:36-39). The quality of mutual respect is a great quality. It can be found in the hearts of great people, and in this sense we all should be great people. It does not have to compromise truth or principle, but it can create brotherhood and sisterhood and the resolution of many problems.

May the Lord bless us that we may look upon one another in that spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve, followed by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God," following which Sister Janette C. Hales, second counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."
