

These testimonies were true foundations to be built upon and followed by obedience and good works. What about us? Are we any different when we have received a testimony of the covenant? Perhaps we now begin to perceive and understand the importance of a testimony and the strength that can be derived from it, with its mortal and eternal consequences. It is definitely a most precious possession, something to be desired now and forever because it determines our life here and eternal life hereafter.

President Benson, our living prophet, stated: "A testimony is one of the few possessions we may take with us when we leave this life. . . . A testimony of Jesus means that you accept the divine mission of Jesus Christ, embrace His gospel, and do His works; it means you accept the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith and his

successors" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, pp. 88-89; or *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 62).

A living prophet has spoken. It is now time for us to stand and be true to our testimonies. May I add my testimony to yours and bear my solemn witness, searched in all humility and acquired by the power of the Holy Ghost, that I know personally that God lives; that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer; that this Church is true and is led by a living prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Nephi's self-reliance

Lehi and his family, after wandering in the wilderness for eight years, came to a land they called Bountiful because it was a place of much fruit and wild honey. They came to a great sea, and they rejoiced unto the Lord because He had preserved them. After they had been in the land Bountiful for a space of many days, the Lord spoke to Nephi and said, "Arise, and get thee into the mountain" (1 Nephi 17:7).

Nephi obeyed the Lord; he went into the mountain and prayed. And the Lord commanded Nephi, "Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters" (1 Nephi 17:8).

Then Nephi asked the Lord, "Whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to

construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?" (1 Nephi 17:9).

The Lord instructed Nephi where he could find ore, but then Nephi was on his own. In 1 Nephi, chapter 17, we read:

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; and after I had made a bellows, that I might have wherewith to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together that I might make fire. . . .

"And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock" (17:11, 16).

This is one of the more interesting stories we have in the scriptures because it tells of an instance in which the Lord provided help but then stepped aside to allow one of His sons

to exercise his own initiative. I have sometimes wondered what would have happened if Nephi had asked the Lord for tools instead of a place to find the ore to make the tools. I doubt the Lord would have honored Nephi's request. You see, the Lord knew that Nephi could make the tools, and it is seldom the Lord will do something for us that we can do for ourselves.

Importance of self-reliance

The Lord does help when we go to Him in times of need, especially when we are committed to His work and respond to His will. But the Lord only helps those who are willing to help themselves. He expects His children to be self-reliant to the degree they can be.

Brigham Young instructed the Saints, "Instead of searching after what the Lord is going to do for us, let us inquire what we can do for ourselves" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 293).

Independence and self-reliance are critical to our spiritual and temporal growth. Whenever we get into situations which threaten our self-reliance, we will find our freedoms threatened as well. If we increase our dependence on anything or anyone except the Lord, we will find an immediate decrease in our freedom to act. As President Heber J. Grant declared, "Nothing destroys the individuality of a man, a woman, or a child as much as the failure to be self-reliant" ("Address," *Relief Society Magazine*, Oct. 1937, p. 627).

Never before in my life has the doctrine of self-reliance been more needed to be preached and encouraged for the benefit of the Saints. We live in a time of rapid change. Governments are rising and falling. Industries

are blooming and then all too soon becoming obsolete. New discoveries in science are soon overshadowed by new findings. Unless we are continuously expanding our understanding and vision, we too will become out-of-date. Research tells us that individuals entering the labor market today will be forced to find three to five different career paths during their productive years.

What must we do to become more self-reliant?

A family tradition

My parents established a family tradition in our home which was fun for me in my early years and has become even more meaningful as I reflect back on it as the years have passed. On the first birthday of each child, the family would gather in the living room. In the center of the living room floor, our parents would place articles for the one-year-old child to select. The selection to be made might indicate an interest the child would pursue in life. The articles were the Bible, a child's bottle filled with milk, a toy, and a savings bank filled with coins. The child was placed on one side of the room and the family on the other side. Family members would encourage the child to crawl toward the objects and make a selection. This was all in fun, of course.

I was told that I selected the bank and went into finance as my profession. I watched my brother Ted select the scriptures, and he pursued law as his chosen profession. Over the years he has relied on the scriptures as a basis for his judgments. My youngest brother, Bob, was the well-rounded member of the family. He crawled over, sat down on the Bible, put the bottle of milk in his mouth, and then held the toy in one hand and the bank in the other.

Spiritual nourishment

Now I propose to you that in this entertaining family activity we can find the most fundamental principles of self-reliance. First, the scriptures represent our need for spiritual nourishment. In the scriptures, the Lord reveals His will to His children. From the very beginning of time, He has instructed His prophets to record His communications with them for the benefit of His children. The holy scriptures declare eternal values; they are the firm foundation on which we can build a successful mortal experience. We become more self-reliant when we study the holy scriptures, which teach the principles that provide a divine center to our lives here in mortality.

We should be comforted by the fact that we have the best text which has ever been written or ever will be written as our guide. We can turn to 2 Kings, the fifth chapter, and learn about obedience. We can study the life of Job and learn integrity. King Benjamin's address in Mosiah teaches industry. The life of Joseph, as told in Genesis 39, tells us what we should do when our standard of morality is being tested.

These are just a few examples of the lessons we could learn from the holy scriptures. They are lessons which have stood the test of time. Our challenge is to make them come alive in the hearts and minds of our families as we assume the responsibility to teach them.

Temporal self-reliance

Second, the bottle filled with milk symbolizes the physical body's need for nourishment. Our welfare services program has taught us by using the spokes of a wheel to define the essential elements of temporal self-reliance. The elements contained in the wheel are

education; physical health; employment; home storage; resource management; and social, emotional, and spiritual strength.

This summer my wife and I had the opportunity to visit an eighty-year-old man who certainly demonstrated each of these elements in his life. He was born in a small Idaho town and worked long hours on the farm to finance his education. He spent his professional life teaching English and Spanish in a small high school. To set aside funds for missions and the education of his large family, he grew strawberry and raspberry crops to be picked and sold to the local markets. This labor occupied his summers.

Because these fruits were so labor-intensive, few people had the ambition to grow them. They were much-wanted crops. The demand was always there for as many berries as he could produce. He was never satisfied with the productivity of his crops, so he studied new varieties in an attempt to find the best producers. His backyard was literally an experimental farm for testing the variety of bushes that produced the sweetest and most abundant fruit in his particular climate. His studies yielded increased productivity. The labor kept him in good physical health. The fields of berries furnished automatic employment for his children each summer. The berries delivered to the market could be exchanged not only for cash but also for commodities to be used in their home storage. He managed his resources to build a beautiful home and supply the needs of his family.

This man loved to watch the Lord's system of multiplying and replenishing the earth, which gave him social, emotional, and spiritual strength. Now retired from active teaching, he continues to grow his berries, not for profit but for satisfaction. Six mornings each week during the berry harvest

season, you will see him leading a parade of ten to twelve cars out of the city toward his berry patch. Families come to add to their home storage by picking the berries. I asked him the price per case if we supplied our own labor. He answered: "I don't know. My pay is seeing the look on people's faces as they leave the field holding the fruits of their labors in their arms."

I am convinced there are thousands of ways for families to build self-reliance by working together in productive pursuits. Perhaps a good family home evening discussion could produce some ideas to help make your family unit more temporally self-reliant.

Proper use of resources

Third, the toy I mentioned earlier represents the acquisition of things of the world. We are bombarded today with powerful media to acquire now and pay later in what are purported to be painless monthly installments. We live in an impatient world where everyone wants everything now. The acquisition of worldly goods seems to foster an appetite for more rather than any kind of lasting satisfaction.

Using our resources and worldly goods wisely and extending their life will help us become more self-reliant. I watched a young family move this summer, and I was intrigued by the labels on the boxes coming out of the storage room. They read, "Clothing—Girls—2 years old," "Clothing—Girls—3 years old," and so on up. Clearly, this family had a well-conceived plan to maximize the usage of purchased items of clothing.

We live in a world blessed with so much abundance. Let us be certain that the resources with which we are blessed are never wasted.

Financial well-being

Finally, the fourth item—the bank. It is a symbol of our financial well-being. I learned a great lesson early in my business career. My boss called me into his office. I could tell he had something on his mind. He said, "Give me a definition of interest." Of course, I reached back in my training and gave him a definition I had learned from a textbook. He said, "No, no, no, that's not the one I want. You listen and remember this one: Thems that understands it, earns it; and thems that don't, pays it."

Now it doesn't take a genius to understand that before you can collect interest, you must first have some savings. Having savings while continuing to increase one's standard of living requires understanding of one simple practice and then religiously applying it. After paying your tithing of 10 percent to the Lord, you pay yourself a predetermined amount directly into savings. That leaves you a balance of your income to budget for taxes, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. It is amazing to me that so many people work all of their lives for the grocer, the landlord, the power company, the automobile salesman, and the bank and yet think so little of their own efforts that they pay themselves nothing.

Be prudent, wise, and conservative in your investment programs. It is by consistently and regularly adding to your investments that you will build your emergency and retirement savings. This will add to your progress in becoming self-reliant.

The principle of self-reliance is spiritual as well as temporal. It is not a doomsday program; it is something to be practiced each and every day of our lives. May we continue to hold fast to the eternal truths of self-reliance in my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Jesus, Savior" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Twelve, has just provided us a most

timely message, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Jesus, Savior."

Following my remarks the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session by singing "How Gentle God's Commands." The benediction will be offered by Elder Clinton L. Cutler of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Jesus loved children

From the book of Matthew we learn that after Jesus and His disciples descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, they paused at Galilee, then came to Capernaum. The disciples said unto Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:1-6).

I think it significant that Jesus loved these little ones who so recently had left the preexistence to come to earth. Children then and children now bless our lives, kindle our love, and prompt our good deeds.

Our sacred opportunity

Is it any wonder that the poet Wordsworth speaks thus of our birth: "Trailing clouds of glory do we come From God, who is our home" (William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood").

Most of these little ones come to parents who eagerly await their arrival, mothers and fathers who rejoice to be a part of that miracle we call birth. No sacrifice is too great, no pain too severe, no waiting too long.

No wonder we are shocked when a wire story originating from a city in America informs that "a newborn girl who was wrapped in a paper bag and dumped in a garbage can is under close observation at a hospital. The child is doing well. 'She's a real beautiful, healthy baby,' a hospital spokesman said Wednesday. Police said the infant was discovered after trash men emptied the garbage can into the back end of their dump truck and saw something move in the debris. Authorities are looking for the mother."

It is our solemn duty, our precious privilege, even our sacred opportunity to welcome to our homes and to our hearts the children who grace our lives.

Our children have three classrooms of learning which are quite distinct one from another. I speak of the