

The Second Great Commandment

By President Russell M. Nelson

Our greatest joy comes as we help our brothers and sisters.

My dear brothers and sisters, thank you for all you are doing to help gather Israel on both sides of the veil, to strengthen your families, and to bless the lives of those in need. Thank you for living as true followers of Jesus Christ.¹ You know and love to obey His two great commandments, to love God and to love your neighbors.²

During the last six months, Sister Nelson and I have met thousands of Saints as we have traveled to Central and South America, the islands of the Pacific, and various cities in the United States. As we travel, our hope is to build *your* faith. Yet we always return having had *our* faith strengthened by the members and friends we meet. May I share three meaningful moments from our recent experiences?





In May, Sister Nelson and I traveled with Elder Gerrit W. and Sister Susan Gong to the South Pacific. While in Auckland, New Zealand, we had the honor of meeting with imams from two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, where just two months earlier, innocent worshippers had been gunned down in an act of horrible violence.

We extended our sympathy to these brothers of another faith and reaffirmed our mutual commitment to religious freedom.

We also offered volunteer labor and modest financial assistance to rebuild their mosques. Our meeting with these Muslim leaders was filled with tender expressions of brotherhood.





In August, along with Elder Quentin L. and Sister Mary Cook, Sister Nelson and I met individuals in Buenos Aires, Argentina—most of them not of our faith—whose lives have been changed by wheelchairs provided to them through our Latter-day Saint Charities. We were inspired as they expressed joy-filled gratitude for their newfound mobility.

A third precious moment occurred just a few weeks ago here in Salt Lake City. It came from a unique letter I received on my birthday from a young woman I will call Mary—age 14.

Mary wrote about things she and I had in common: “You have 10 kids. We have 10 kids. You speak Mandarin. Seven of the kids in my family, including me, were adopted from China, so Mandarin is our first language. You are a heart surgeon. My sister has had two open-heart [operations]. You like two-hour church. We like two-hour church. You have perfect pitch. My brother has perfect pitch too. He is blind like me.”

Mary’s words touched me deeply, revealing not only her great spirit but also the consecration of her mother and father.

Latter-day Saints, as with other followers of Jesus Christ, are always looking for ways to help, to lift, and to love others. They who are willing to be called the Lord’s people “are willing to bear one another’s burdens, ... to mourn with those that mourn; ... and [to] comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”³

They truly seek to live the first and second great commandments. When we love *God* with all our hearts, He turns our hearts to the well-being of *others* in a beautiful, virtuous cycle.

It would be impossible to calculate the amount of service that Latter-day Saints render around the globe every day of every year, but it *is* possible to calculate the

good the Church as an organization does to bless men and women—boys and girls—who are in need of a helping hand.

The Church's humanitarian outreach was launched in 1984. Then a Churchwide fast was held to raise funds to assist those afflicted by a devastating drought in eastern Africa. Church members donated \$6.4 million on that *single* fast day.



Then-Elder M. Russell Ballard and Brother Glenn L. Pace were dispatched to Ethiopia to assess how those consecrated funds could best be used. This effort proved to be the beginning of what would later be known as Latter-day Saint Charities.

Since that time, Latter-day Saint Charities has provided more than *two billion* dollars in aid to assist those in need throughout the world. This assistance is offered to recipients regardless of their church affiliation, nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender, or political persuasion.

That is not all. To assist members of the Lord's Church in distress, we love and live the ancient law of the fast.⁴ We go hungry to help others who are hungry. One day each month, we go without food and donate the cost of that food (and more) to help those in need.

I will never forget my first visit to West Africa in 1986. The Saints came to our meetings in great numbers. Though they had little in terms of material possessions, most came dressed in spotless white clothing.

I asked the stake president how he cared for members who had so little. He replied that their bishops knew their people well. If members could afford two meals a day, no help was needed. But if they could afford only one meal or less—even with family help—bishops provided food, financed from fast offerings. Then he added this remarkable fact: their fast-offering contributions usually *exceeded* their expenses. Surplus fast offerings were then sent to people *elsewhere* whose needs

exceeded theirs. Those stalwart African Saints taught me a great lesson about the power of the *law* and the *spirit* of the fast.

As members of the Church, we feel a kinship to those who suffer in any way.⁵ As sons and daughters of God, we are all brothers and sisters. We heed an Old Testament admonition: “Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy.”⁶

We also strive to live the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 25:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me. ...

“... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”⁷

Let me cite just a few examples of how the Church follows these teachings of the Savior.



To help relieve hunger, the Church operates 124 bishops’ storehouses throughout the world. Through them, approximately 400,000 food orders are given each year to individuals in need. In locations where no storehouse exists, bishops and branch presidents draw from fast-offering funds of the Church to provide food and supplies for their needy members.

However, the challenge of hunger goes far beyond the boundaries of the Church. It is increasing throughout the world. A recent United Nations report indicated that the number of undernourished people in the world now exceeds 820 million—or almost one in nine of the earth’s inhabitants.⁸

What a sobering statistic! How grateful we are for your contributions. Thanks to your heartfelt generosity, millions throughout the world will receive much-needed food, clothing, temporary shelter, wheelchairs, medicines, clean water, and more.

Much sickness throughout the world is caused because of unclean water. To date, the Church's humanitarian initiative has helped provide clean water in hundreds of communities in 76 countries.

A project in Luputa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a great example. With a population exceeding 100,000, the town had *no running water*. Citizens had to walk long distances for sources of safe water. A mountain spring was discovered 18 miles (29 km) away, but townspeople could not access that water on a regular basis.



When our humanitarian missionaries learned about this challenge, they worked with the leaders of Luputa by supplying materials and training to pipe the water to the city. The people of Luputa spent *three years* digging a one-meter-deep trench through rock and jungle. By working together, the joyful day finally arrived when fresh, clean water was available to all in that village.



The Church also helps refugees, whether from civil strife, the ravages of nature, or religious persecution. More than 70 million people are now displaced from their homes.⁹



In the year 2018 alone, the Church provided emergency supplies to refugees in 56 countries. In addition, many Church members volunteer their time to help refugees integrate into new communities. We thank every one of you who reach out to help those who are trying to establish new homes.



Through generous donations to Deseret Industries outlets in the United States, millions of pounds of clothing are collected and sorted each year. While local bishops use this vast inventory to help members in need, the *greatest* portion is donated to other charitable organizations who distribute the items worldwide.

And just last year, the Church provided vision care for more than 300,000 people in 35 countries, newborn care for thousands of mothers and infants in 39 countries, and wheelchairs for more than 50,000 people living in dozens of countries.

The Church is well known for being among the first responders when tragedy strikes. Even *before* a hurricane hits, Church leaders and staff in the affected locations are mapping out plans for how they will deliver relief supplies and volunteer assistance to those who will be impacted.



Last year alone, the Church carried out more than 100 disaster-relief projects around the world, helping victims of hurricanes, fires, floods, earthquakes, and other calamities. Whenever possible, our Church members in yellow Helping Hands vests mobilize in great numbers to help those afflicted by the disaster. This kind of service, rendered by so many of you, is the very essence of ministering.

My dear brothers and sisters, the activities I have described are merely a small part of the growing welfare and humanitarian outreach of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹⁰ And *you* are the ones who make all this possible. Because of your exemplary lives, your generous hearts, and your helping hands, it is no wonder that many communities and government leaders are praising your efforts.¹¹

Since becoming President of the Church, I have been amazed at how many presidents, prime ministers, and ambassadors have sincerely thanked me for our humanitarian aid to their people. And they have also expressed gratitude for the strength that our faithful members bring to their country as loyal, contributing citizens.

I have also marveled as world leaders have visited the First Presidency expressing *their hope* for the Church to be established in their lands. Why? Because they know that Latter-day Saints will help to build strong families and communities, making life better for others *wherever* they live.

Regardless of where we call home, members of the Church feel passionately about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Thus, *our* greatest joy comes as we help our brothers and sisters, no matter where we live in this wonderful world.

Giving help to others—making a conscientious effort to care about others as much as or *more* than we care about ourselves—is our joy. Especially, I might add, when it is not convenient and when it takes us out of our comfort zone. *Living* that second great commandment is the *key* to becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters, you are living exemplars of the fruits that come from following the teachings of Jesus Christ. I thank you! I love you!

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His Church has been restored in these latter days to fulfill its divine purposes. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.