



There Was Bread

By Bishop W. Christopher Waddell
First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

As we seek to become temporally prepared, we can face the trials of life with increased confidence.

Prior to travel restrictions caused by the current pandemic, I was returning home from an international assignment which, due to scheduling issues, created a Sunday layover. I had time between flights to attend a local sacrament meeting, where I was also able to share a brief message. Following the meeting, an enthusiastic deacon approached me and asked if I knew President Nelson and if I had ever had a chance to shake his hand. I answered that I did know him, that I had shaken his hand, and that, as a member of the Presiding Bishopric, I had the opportunity to meet with President Nelson and his counselors a couple of times each week.

The young deacon then sat down on a chair, threw his hands in the air, and shouted, “This is the greatest day of my life!” Brothers and sisters, I may not throw my hands in the air and shout, but I am eternally grateful for a living prophet and for the direction we receive from prophets, seers, and revelators, especially during these times of challenge.

From the beginning of time, the Lord has provided direction to help His people prepare spiritually and temporally against the calamities and trials that He knows will come as part of this mortal experience. These calamities may be personal or general in nature, but the Lord's guidance will provide protection and support to the extent that we heed and act upon His counsel. A wonderful example is provided in an account from the book of Genesis, where we learn of Joseph in Egypt and his inspired interpretation of Pharaoh's dream.

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, ... God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. ...

"Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

"And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt."¹

Pharaoh listened to Joseph, responded to what God had showed him in a dream, and immediately set about preparing for what was to come. The scriptures then record:

"And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

"And he gathered up all the food of the seven years. ...

"And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, ... until he left numbering; for it was without number."²

Once the seven years of plenty had passed, we are told that "seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread."³

Today we are blessed to be led by prophets who understand the need for us to prepare against the calamities "which should come"⁴ and who also recognize the limitations or restrictions that we may encounter in striving to follow their counsel.

There is a clear understanding that the effects of COVID-19, as well as devastating natural disasters, are no respecter of persons and cross ethnic, social, and religious boundaries on every continent. Jobs have been lost and incomes reduced as the opportunity to work has been affected by layoffs and the ability to work has been impacted by health and legal challenges.

To all who have been affected, we express understanding and concern for your situation, as well as a firm conviction that better days are ahead. You have been blessed with bishops and branch presidents who seek out members of their congregations with temporal needs and who have access to tools and resources that can help you reestablish your lives and place you on the path to self-reliance as you apply principles of preparedness.

In today's environment, with a pandemic that has devastated whole economies as well as individual lives, it would be inconsistent with a compassionate Savior to ignore the reality that many are struggling and ask them to begin building a

reserve of food and money for the future. However, that does not mean that we should permanently ignore principles of preparation—only that these principles should be applied “in wisdom and order”⁵ so that in the future we might say, as did Joseph in Egypt, “There was bread.”⁶

The Lord does not expect us to do more than we can do, but He does expect us to do what we can do, when we can do it. As President Nelson reminded us in our last general conference, “The Lord loves effort.”⁷

Church leaders have often encouraged Latter-day Saints “to prepare for adversity in life by having a basic supply of food and water and some money in savings.”⁸ At the same time, we are encouraged to “be wise” and “not go to extremes”⁹ in our efforts to establish a home storage supply and a financial reserve. A resource entitled *Personal Finances for Self-Reliance*, published in 2017 and currently available on the Church website in 36 languages, begins with a message from the First Presidency, which states:

“The Lord has declared, ‘It is my purpose to provide for my saints’ [Doctrine and Covenants 104:15]. This revelation is a promise from the Lord that He will provide temporal blessings and open the door of self-reliance. ...

“... Accepting and living these principles will better enable you to receive the temporal blessings promised by the Lord.

“We invite you to diligently study and apply these principles and teach them to your family members. As you do so, your life will be blessed ... [because] you are a child of our Father in Heaven. He loves you and will never forsake you. He knows you and is ready to extend to you the spiritual and temporal blessings of self-reliance.”¹⁰

This resource includes chapters devoted to creating and living within a budget, protecting your family against hardship, managing a financial crisis, investing for the future, and many more and is available for everyone on the Church website or through your local leaders.

When considering the principle of preparedness, we can look back to Joseph in Egypt for inspiration. Knowing what would happen would not have been sufficient to carry them through the “lean” years without a degree of sacrifice during the years of abundance. Rather than consume all that Pharaoh’s subjects could produce, limits were established and followed, providing sufficient for their immediate, as well as their future, needs. It was not enough to know that challenging times would come. They had to act, and because of their effort, “there was bread.”¹¹

This leads to an important question: “Therefore, what?” A good place to begin is to understand that all things are spiritual to the Lord, “and not at any time” has He given us “a law which was temporal.”¹² Everything, then, points to Jesus Christ as the foundation upon which we must build even our temporal preparedness.

Being temporally prepared and self-reliant means “believing that through the grace, or enabling power, of Jesus Christ and our own effort, we are able to obtain all the spiritual and temporal necessities of life we require for ourselves and our families.”¹³

Additional aspects of a spiritual foundation for temporal preparedness include acting “in wisdom and order,”¹⁴ which implies a gradual buildup of food storage and savings over time, as well as embracing “small and simple” means,¹⁵ which is a demonstration of faith that the Lord will magnify our small but consistent efforts.

With a spiritual foundation in place, we can then successfully apply two important elements of temporal preparedness—managing finances and home storage.

Key principles to manage your finances include the payment of tithes and offerings, eliminating and avoiding debt, preparing and living within a budget, and saving for the future.

Key home storage principles include the storage of food, the storage of water, and the storage of other necessities based on individual and family needs, all because “the best storehouse”¹⁶ is the home, which becomes the “most accessible reserve in times of need.”¹⁷

As we embrace spiritual principles and seek inspiration from the Lord, we will be guided to know the Lord’s will for us, individually and as families, and how best to apply the important principles of temporal preparedness. The most important step of all is to begin.

Elder David A. Bednar taught this principle when he said: “Taking action is the exercise of faith. ... True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ and always leads to action.”¹⁸

Brothers and sisters, in an ever-changing world, we must prepare for uncertainties. Even with better days ahead, we know that the temporal peaks and valleys of mortality will continue. As we seek to become temporally prepared, we can face the trials of life with increased confidence, peace in our hearts, and like Joseph in Egypt, we will be able to say, even in stressful circumstances, “There was bread.”¹⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.