

Self-Reliance

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The parable of the virgins provides a valuable lesson in personal preparedness and self-reliance. There were five virgins who were prepared with oil for their lamps for the coming of the bridegroom, and there were five virgins who were unprepared and were shut out of the wedding. Although they were desirous to enter into the wedding, they were rejected "saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matt. 25:11-12). This lesson is both temporal and spiritual and lays the doctrinal groundwork for self-reliance and preparedness among the faithful in Christ.

We are called to be Prepared and Self-Reliant

Marion G. Romney said, "No self-respecting Church member will voluntarily shift the responsibility for his own maintenance to another. Furthermore, a man not only has the responsibility to care for himself; he also has the responsibility to care for his family" ("The Basics of Church Welfare," address to the Priesthood Board, 6 Mar. 1974, 2.). This principle was also expounded by the Apostle Paul when he said "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8).

Self-Reliance is a key component to provident Christian living with its purposes being "to encourage the economic, intellectual, physical, and spiritual preparedness of families and members. Its effect is to help them live an abundant life and to prevent them from becoming poor and needy or distressed" (Lane Johnson, "A Little Bit of Planning, a Lot of Success," Ensign, Jun 1977, 6).

Key Areas of Self-Reliance

The key areas of self-reliance for families are outlined by Lane Johnson of the aforementioned article: literacy and education, career development, financial and resource management, home production and storage, physical health, and social-emotional and spiritual strength. These six areas capture the essence of self-reliance and that which is important for individuals and families to focus upon in order to maintain optimal preparedness.

The Widely Known Practice of Mormon Self-Reliance

Since the early 1800's the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been well known for preaching and living self-reliance among its members. To build a framework of self-reliance we will tear a page directly out of the Mormon handbook for provident living: L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, in the May 1981 edition of the Ensign, authored an article titled "The Need to Teach Personal and Family Preparedness" (Ensign, May 1981, 87 and Welfare Services Resource Handbook, 1980, p. 9). Like many articles from Church leaders before and after his, the apostle Perry urges families and individuals to take seriously their responsibility in temporal and spiritual preparation and outlines in nine points the operation of the Church welfare program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and how personal and family preparedness is key to its effectiveness:

1. The Church welfare system is designed to assist the membership in case of a large, physical disaster...to assist the ill, the injured, the incapacitated, and to rehabilitate them to a productive life.
2. The home must be the heart of the welfare program.
3. The foundation of the Church welfare program is personal and family preparedness. The organizational support is in place to train and prepare the membership in this basic responsibility.
4. Personal and family preparedness must be tailored to fit the circumstances of each family. Consideration must be given to their unique requirements.

5. Each family organization should include a family council comprised of all members of the family unit.
6. The first-line support to the families in the Church organization is priesthood home teaching and Relief Society visiting teaching.
7. The Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leader can help the head of the household by teaching the principles of welfare.
8. The Relief Society president gives the same kind of strength and support to the women of the ward.
9. Supporting the bishop is a stake organization. The bishop can request assistance from the stake president...The stake president has a high council and a stake Relief Society organization to furnish the training support required.

Storing a Year's Supply of Food

When one first considers the concept of personal and family preparedness, with the practices associated in keeping with the doctrine, it can be quite overwhelming. The practice for example of storing a year's supply of food and managing all of the affairs of a family in a disciplined way makes good sense; however, it's easy to get stalled in not knowing where to start. The counsel to store a year supply of food is not new. In 1937 J. Reuben Clark Jr. said, "Let every head of every household see to it that he has on hand enough food and clothing, and, where possible, fuel also, for at least a year ahead" (Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 26).

When our family lived in Houston Texas we were able to finally amass a year's supply of food, including dry and canned goods and an appropriate supply of water. We also heeded the advice of local Church leaders and developed a 72-hour kit for our family. Residents of Houston are constantly confronted with Hurricanes and other such calamities and continually counseled by local government authorities to have a supply of food and water in case of emergencies. Each time this counsel came we were blessed with a peace of mind and readiness that allowed us to avoid anxiety and be ready for whatever might come. When the 9/11 attacks in New York took place, the

Federal Government counseled Americans to have a supply of food and 72-hour kit. We again found ourselves far ahead of the government counsel due to our heeding the advice of Church leaders. During the meltdown of world financial institutions in late 2008 one could hear the whisperings of officials about the possibility of massive unemployment and food shortages—indicating again the wisdom of being temporarily prepared.

Conclusion

The Christian doctrine, teachings, and directives regarding personal and family preparedness and self-reliance—whether they be food storage, finances, employment, health, or education—are an excellent example of the practical application of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the lives of all who believe.

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