

REACH WITH A Rescuing Hand



By President
Gordon B. Hinckley
(1910–2008)

Gordon B. Hinckley was set apart as the 15th President of the Church on March 12, 1995. He pioneered the building of small temples, announcing 79 new temples during his presidency. President Hinckley is also remembered for traveling to visit Latter-day Saints in over 60 nations. The following article is excerpted from a general conference address he delivered on October 6, 1996. For the full address, go to conference.lds.org.

All of us need to be reminded of the past. It is from history that we gain knowledge which can save us from repeating mistakes and on which we can build for the future. . . .

I take you back to the general conference of October 1856. On Saturday of that conference Franklin D. Richards and a handful of associates arrived in the [Salt Lake Valley]. They had traveled from Winter Quarters with strong teams and light wagons and had been able to make good time. Brother Richards immediately sought out President Young. He reported that there were hundreds of men, women, and children scattered over the long trail from

Scottsbluff to this valley. Most of them were pulling handcarts. They were accompanied by two wagon trains which had been assigned to assist them. They had reached the area of the last crossing of the North Platte River. Ahead of them lay a trail that was uphill all the way to the Continental Divide with many, many miles beyond that. . . .

The next morning [President Young] came to the old Tabernacle which stood on [Temple Square]. He said to the people:

“. . . Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. . . .

“That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people.

“I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams.

“I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. *Go and bring in those people now on the plains.*”¹

That afternoon, food, bedding, and clothing in great quantities were assembled by the women.

The next morning, horses were shod and wagons were repaired and loaded.



Stories of their rescue speak of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The following morning, Tuesday, 16 mule teams pulled out and headed eastward. By the end of October, there were 250 teams on the road to give relief.

Wonderful sermons have been preached from this pulpit, my brethren and sisters. But none has been more eloquent than that spoken by President Young in those circumstances.

. . . Stories of their rescue need to be repeated again and again. They speak of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. . .

. . . We have some of our own who cry out in pain and suffering and loneliness and fear. Ours is a great and solemn duty to reach out and help them, to lift them, to feed them if they are hungry, to nurture their

spirits if they thirst for truth and righteousness.

There are so many young people who wander aimlessly and walk the tragic trail of drugs, gangs, immorality, and the whole brood of ills that accompany these things. There are widows who long for friendly voices and that spirit of anxious concern which speaks of love. There are those who were once warm in the faith but whose faith has grown cold. Many of them wish to come back but do not know quite how to do it. They need friendly hands reaching out to them. With a little effort, many of them can be brought back to feast again at the table of the Lord.

My brethren and sisters, I would hope, I would pray, that each of us . . . would resolve to seek those who need help, who are in desperate and difficult circumstances, and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them, and put them on the way of happy and productive lives.

I leave with you my beloved friends, my co-workers in this wonderful cause, my testimony of the truth of this work, the work of the Almighty, the work of the Redeemer of mankind. ■

Punctuation and spelling standardized.

NOTE

1. Brigham Young, quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarters to Zion* (1960), 120–21.