



Sugar Beets and the Worth of a Soul

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

Many years ago, Bishop Marvin O. Ashton (1883–1946), who served as a counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, gave an illustration I'd like to share with you. Picture with me, if you will, a farmer driving a large open-bed truck filled with sugar beets en route to the sugar refinery. As the farmer drives along a bumpy dirt road, some of the sugar beets bounce from the truck and are strewn along the roadside. When he realizes he has lost some of the beets, he instructs his helpers, "There's just as much sugar in those which have slipped off. Let's go back and get them!"

In my application of this illustration, the sugar beets represent the members of this Church for whom we who are called as leaders have responsibility; and those that have fallen out of the truck represent men and women, youth and children who, for whatever reason, have fallen from the path of activity. Paraphrasing the farmer's comments concerning the sugar beets, I say of these souls, precious to our Father and our Master: "There's just as much value in those who have slipped off. Let's go back and get them!"

Right now, today, some of them are caught in the current of popular opinion.

Others are torn by the tide of turbulent times. Yet others are drawn down and drowned in the whirlpool of sin.

This need not be. We have the doctrines of truth. We have the programs. We have the people. We have the power. Our mission is more than meetings. Our service is to save souls.

Our Service: Save Souls

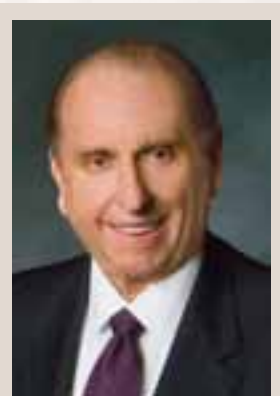
The Lord emphasized the worth of each man or woman, youth or child when He declared:

"The worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:10, 15–16).

Remember that you are entitled to our Father's blessings in this work. He did not call you to your privileged post to walk



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alone, without guidance, trusting to luck. On the contrary, He knows your skill, He realizes your devotion, and He will convert your supposed inadequacies to recognized strengths. He has promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

Primary leaders, do you know the children you are serving? Young Women leaders, do you know your young women? Aaronic Priesthood leaders, do you know the young men? Relief Society and Melchizedek Priesthood leaders, do you know the women and men over whom you have been called to preside? Do you understand their problems and their perplexities, their yearnings, ambitions, and hopes? Do you know how far they have traveled, the troubles they have experienced, the burdens they have carried, the sorrows they have borne?

I encourage you to reach out to those you serve and to love them. When you really love those you serve, they will not find themselves in that dreaded "Never, Never Land"—*never* the object of concern, *never* the recipient of needed aid. It may not be your privilege to open gates of cities or doors of palaces, but true happiness and lasting joy will come to you and to each one you serve as you take a hand and reach a heart.

Lessons Engraved on the Heart

Should you become discouraged in your efforts, remember that sometimes the Lord's timetable does not coincide with ours. When I was a bishop many years ago, one of the leaders of the young women, Jessie Cox, came to me and said, "Bishop, I am a failure!" When I asked why she felt this way, she said, "I haven't been able to get any of my Mutual girls married in the temple, as a good teacher would have. I've tried my very best, but my best apparently wasn't good enough."

I tried to console Jessie by telling her that I, as her bishop, knew that she had done all she could. And as I followed those girls through the years, I found that each one was eventually sealed in the temple. If the lesson is engraved on the heart, it is not lost.

I have learned as I have watched faithful servants like Jessie Cox that each leader can be a true shepherd, serving under the direction of our great and Good Shepherd, privileged to lead and cherish and care for those who know and love His voice (see John 10:2-4).

Seeking the Wandering Sheep

May I share an additional experience I had as a bishop. I noted one Sunday morning that Richard, one of our priests who seldom attended, was again missing from priesthood meeting. I left the quorum in the care of the adviser and visited Richard's home. His mother said he was working at a local garage servicing automobiles. I drove to the garage in search of Richard and looked everywhere but could not find him. Suddenly, I had the inspiration to gaze down into the old-fashioned grease pit situated at the side of





the building. From the darkness I could see two shining eyes. I heard Richard say, “You found me, Bishop! I’ll come up.” As Richard and I visited, I told him how much we missed him and needed him. I elicited a commitment from him to attend his meetings.

His activity improved dramatically. He and his family eventually moved away, but two years later I received an invitation to speak in Richard’s ward before he left on a mission. In his remarks that day, Richard said that the turning point in his life was when his bishop found him hiding in a grease pit and helped him to return to activity.

My dear brothers and sisters, ours is the responsibility, even the solemn duty, to reach out to all of those whose lives we have been called to touch. Our duty is to guide them to the celestial kingdom of God. May we ever remember that the mantle of leadership is not the cloak of comfort but rather the robe of responsibility. May we reach out to rescue those who need our help and our love.

As we succeed, as we bring a woman or man, a girl or boy back into activity, we will be answering a wife’s or sister’s or mother’s fervent prayer, helping fulfill a husband’s or brother’s or father’s greatest desire. We will be honoring a loving Father’s direction and following an obedient Son’s example (see John 12:26; D&C 59:5). And our

names will forever be honored by those whom we reach.

With all my heart I pray that our Heavenly Father will ever guide us as we strive to serve and to save His children. ■

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. For a family with small children, read the section “Seeking the Wandering Sheep.” Ask the children to describe what Richard might have looked like when he was in the grease pit. Then have them describe how Richard would look as a missionary. Ask the family, “Why do you think it was important for the bishop to look for Richard?” Conclude by reading Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 15–16.

2. As you begin the lesson, drop a few coins on the floor. Ask, “Would it be important for me to pick up the coins? Why?” As you pick them up, explain that people have infinitely more value than the coins. Tell the sugar beet story. Ask how we can help “take a hand and reach a heart” to bring people back into Church activity.