



By President
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OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO Rescue

For Latter-day Saints, the need to rescue our brothers and sisters who have, for one reason or another, strayed from the path of Church activity is of eternal significance. Do we know of such people who once embraced the gospel? If so, what is our responsibility to rescue them?

Consider the lost among the aged, the widowed, and the sick. All too often they are found in the parched and desolate wilderness of isolation called loneliness. When youth departs, when health declines, when vigor wanes, when the light of hope flickers ever so dimly, they can be succored and sustained by the hand that helps and the heart that knows compassion.

There are, of course, others who need rescue. Some struggle with sin while others wander in fear or apathy or ignorance. For whatever reason, they have isolated themselves from activity in the Church. And they will almost certainly remain lost unless there awakens in us—the active members of the Church—a desire to rescue and to save.

Someone to Show the Way

Some time ago I received a letter written by a man who had strayed from the Church. It typifies too many of our members. After describing how he had become inactive, he wrote:

“I had so much and now have so little. I am unhappy and feel as though I am failing in everything. The gospel has never left my heart, even though it has left my life. I ask for your prayers.

“Please don’t forget those of us who are out here—the lost Latter-day Saints. I know where the Church is, but sometimes I think I need someone else to show me the way, encourage me, take away my fear, and bear testimony to me.”

While I was reading this letter, my thoughts turned to a visit I made to one of the great art galleries of the world—the famed Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England. There, exquisitely framed, is a masterpiece painted in 1831 by Joseph Mallord William Turner. The painting features heavy-laden black clouds and the fury of a turbulent sea portending danger and death. A light from a stranded vessel gleams far off. In the foreground, tossed high by incoming waves of foaming water, is a large lifeboat. The men pull mightily on the oars as the lifeboat plunges into the tempest. On the shore stand a wife and two children, wet with rain and whipped by wind. They gaze anxiously seaward. In my mind I abbreviated the name of the painting. To me it became *To the Rescue*.¹

Amid the storms of life, danger lurks. Men and women, boys and girls find themselves stranded and facing destruction. Who will guide the lifeboats, leaving behind the comforts of home and family, and go to the rescue?

Our task is not insurmountable. We are on the Lord’s errand; we are entitled to His help.

During the Master’s ministry, He called fishermen at Galilee to leave their nets and follow Him, declaring, “I will make you fishers of men.”² May we join the ranks of the fishers of men and women, that we might provide whatever help we can.



It is my prayer that we might have a desire to rescue the less active and to bring them back to the joy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that they might partake with us of all that full fellowship has to offer.

May we reach out to rescue the lost who surround us: the aged, the widowed, the sick, those with disabilities, the less active, and those who are not keeping the commandments. May we extend to them the hand that helps and the heart that knows compassion. By doing so, we will bring joy into their hearts, and we will experience the rich satisfaction that comes to us when we help another along the pathway to eternal life. ■

NOTES

1. The painting's full title is *Life-Boat and Manby Apparatus Going Off to a Stranded Vessel Making Signal (Blue Lights) of Distress*.
2. Matthew 4:19.
3. Ephesians 2:19.
4. See Matthew 22:39.

Ours is the duty to reach out to rescue those who have left the safety of activity, that such might be brought to the table of the Lord to feast on His word, to enjoy the companionship of His Spirit, and to be “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”³

The Principle of Love

I have found that two fundamental reasons largely account for a return to activity and for changes of attitudes, habits, and actions. First, individuals return because someone has shown them their eternal possibilities and has helped them decide to achieve them. The less active can't long rest content with mediocrity once they see that excellence is within their reach.

Second, others return because loved ones or “fellowcitizens with the saints” have followed the admonition of the Savior, have loved their

neighbors as themselves,⁴ and have helped others to bring their dreams to fulfillment and their ambitions to realization.

The catalyst in this process has been—and will continue to be—the principle of love.

In a very real sense, those persons stranded in the storm-tossed sea of Turner's painting are like many of our less-active members who await rescue by those who guide the lifeboats. Their hearts yearn for help. Mothers and fathers pray for their sons and daughters. Wives plead to heaven that their husbands may be reached. Sometimes children pray for their parents.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Consider asking the people you visit if they know anyone who has been struggling to attend church. You could choose one person and discuss ways to show love, such as inviting him or her to participate in a family home evening or to come over for a meal.