



THE WINDOWS *of* HEAVEN

BY ELDER H. BRYAN RICHARDS

Served as a member of the Seventy
from 1998 to 2006

I got my first real job when I was about 13 years old. I was a newspaper delivery boy. I still remember riding my bike around my neighborhood in Salt Lake City every evening, throwing papers onto my neighbors' front steps. I didn't make a whole lot of money at it, but each month when I received my wages, there was no question that I would pay tithing. My parents had set the example of paying tithing, and I knew it was a commandment from the Lord (see D&C 119:3-4).

I remember attending tithing settlement as a youngster with my mother and father. It was such a natural thing to me to visit with the bishop and to declare myself a full-tithe payer. Even as I got older and started earning more money, I always paid tithing first.

When I became a parent, it was important to me that each of my children visit individually with the bishop at tithing settlement. My wife and I tried to teach them early on to pay tithing on the little allowance we gave them so that when they grew older it was something they had already seen the blessings of and knew they should do.

Blessings Will Come

When Sister Richards and I were first married, we were going to school and had very little income to meet our expenses. Paying our tithing was a great sacrifice. But Sister Richards never even considered using our tithing money for other things we greatly needed, like food or rent. She insisted that we pay our tithing first, and we always did. Sometimes we had only a penny left when all of our obligations were met, but we always seemed to have just enough to meet them. That was a blessing from exercising our faith to pay tithing.

One blessing that I believe has come from paying tithing is that over the course of my career I never once went for a long time without a job. At one point early in my career I was laid off from my job, and within two weeks I had another job making more than I had at my previous one. During 25 years with one company, I went through many periods when employees were laid off all around me, but I wasn't. I believe the Lord blessed me for paying tithing.

My young brothers and sisters, if you will exercise the faith necessary to pay tithing, I promise you, you will be blessed. No matter how small your contribution may seem, pay



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it without the situation. Make it the first thing you do when you earn some money. You will develop faith to

do things you otherwise may not think you have the ability to accomplish. You will be wiser in how you manage your money, and you will gain the sweet assurance that comes from knowing you are doing what the Lord asks of you. This will be a

source of strength, and you will be able to draw on that strength in the future.

I know that Sister Richards and I received many blessings as a result of paying tithing. I have also witnessed the overflow of blessings that have come to faithful Latter-day Saints in remote parts of the world because they were willing to pay tithing.

The Church in India

One incident in particular made a great impression on me. In 2000 I had the opportunity to attend the groundbreaking ceremony of the first Latter-day Saint meetinghouse that would be built from the ground up in India. The location for this chapel was in Rajahmundry, a city near the eastern coast of the country. It is a relatively small city for India, even though about three million people live there.

I traveled to Rajahmundry with my wife; the mission president, Ebenezer Solomon; and his wife. As we arrived at the crowded train station in Rajahmundry, my heart

went out to the many people I saw living in extreme poverty. There were many people sleeping on the hard floor wherever there was an empty space. When we arrived at the location of the groundbreaking, I noticed a great contrast between the misery I had just witnessed and the joy I saw in the faces of the members gathered to greet us. They were beaming and waving as we approached. They were so happy and excited. While they too lived in poor conditions by some standards, there was no sign of despair or emptiness.

I immediately began to understand why this location had been chosen for a chapel. I admit I had been somewhat unsure why the Church's resources were being focused in this out-of-the-way location. But after I met briefly with the Saints in Rajahmundry, all of my questions were answered. These Latter-day Saints were so faithful and so excited to have their own meetinghouse.

The Widow's Mite

After the groundbreaking ceremony, President Solomon introduced me to four widows who had been baptized several years before. They were all in their 70s. President Solomon informed me that these women had all been full-tithe payers since their baptisms. I was impressed that in an area with so much need, these faithful sisters had never missed an opportunity to pay their tithing, though I'm sure it had been a sacrifice for them.

I asked President Solomon about how much each sister would pay in tithing every month. He gave me a figure in rupees, the currency used in India. I did not understand the amount, so I asked him how much they



would pay in U.S. dollars. I will never forget his answer: “They would pay between one-and-a-half and two pennies.” I was reminded again that paying tithing isn’t a matter of money, but it requires faith! It was humbling to realize that the blessing of a chapel had come to these Saints because of their willingness to sacrifice by paying tithing—even though it was only pennies. I’m sure the Lord must turn those pennies into millions of dollars.

Tithing is not a monetary commandment—it is a principle of faith. The Lord asks 10 percent of our income and waits to see if we will exercise faith in Him to make that sacrifice. The Saints in Rajahmundry had that faith.

I was impressed when we arrived at the building site to find a red carpet rolled out from the road to the canopy where the Saints were gathered. It was about 30 meters long. Under the canopy were red velvet chairs. They were

large and impressive. The carpet and the chairs were worn, but it was the very best these Saints had to offer. They would not give less than their best. It was a humbling experience for me. These Saints in Rajahmundry set the example of faithfully giving to the Lord, whether it was in paying their tithing or providing their best accommodations for the visiting Church leaders.

It may seem to you that 10 percent of your income, small or large, cannot do much good or is not that important. I promise you, it is important. It is important that you live the law of tithing now because it will strengthen your faith and prepare you for trials later on.

The Lord gave us a promise that if we would obey His commandments, He is bound to provide us with the promised blessing (see D&C 82:10; 130:21). I witnessed that blessing in the lives of the Saints in Rajahmundry, and you can witness that blessing in your own life if you will be faithful in paying your tithing. **NE**

LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ELDER RICHARDS; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE