

# More or Less

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**T**he meaning of more and less is not always crystal clear. There are times when less is in reality more and times when more can be less.

The current conventional wisdom is that more is better and less is usually undesirable. For some, the pursuit to acquire more of this world's goods and services has become a passion. For others, more of this world's wealth is necessary just to sustain life or raise living standards to a minimum level. The unbridled desire for more often has tragic consequences. The struggle to set limits, make do with less, and avoid the pitfalls of "more, more, more" has never been more difficult. It is hard to say no to more when you can afford to say yes. But if we constantly want more, we can forget to be grateful for what we do have.

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve warns us that: "We so easily forget that we came into life with nothing. Whatever we get soon seems our natural right, not a gift. And we forget the giver. Then our gaze shifts from what we have been given to what we don't have yet" ("Remembrance and Gratitude," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 11).

Your parents are rightfully anxious about the future. It is difficult to say no to more sports equipment, electronics, lessons, clothes, team participation, et cetera, when parents believe more will help you thrive in an increasingly competitive world. The youth seem to want more, partly because there



is infinitely more to catch their eye. The American Academy of Pediatrics estimated that American children see more than 40,000 commercials a year.

Fewer and fewer of your parents ask you to do chores around the house because they think you are already overwhelmed by social and academic pressures. But if you're devoid of responsibilities, you risk never learning that every individual can be of service and that life has meaning beyond your own happiness.

In her book *My Grandfather's Blessings*, Dr. Rachel Remen tells of becoming good friends with a couple and their young son, Kenny. When she visited, she would sit on the floor with Kenny and play with his two Hot Wheels cars. Sometimes she would have the one without a fender and he had the one with a door missing and sometimes vice versa. He loved those cars!

When a gas station chain offered a Hot Wheels car with every fill-up, she recruited the staff at her clinic to go to that particular station and collect the cars. As soon as she had all of the models, she wrapped them in a big box to take to Kenny. She hoped she wouldn't offend his parents, who lived quite mea-



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gerly. Kenny excitedly opened the big box and took out the cars one by one. They filled the windowsills and even extended to the floor. What a collection! Later, while visiting the family, Rachel noticed Kenny just staring out the window. When she asked Kenny, “What’s the matter? Don’t

you like your new cars?” he looked down very sheepishly. “I’m sorry, Rachel. I guess I just don’t know how to love so many Hot Wheels.” (See “Owning” [2000], 60–61.)

Have you ever thought, after opening Christmas or birthday gifts, “Isn’t there more?” With all the challenges present in this “more generation,” there remains divine counsel to focus on the “doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, . . . to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord, . . . [and to] observe the Sabbath day [and] keep it holy” (D&C 68:25, 28–29).

The meaning of more and less is not always crystal clear. There are times when less is in reality more and times when more can be less. For instance, less pursuit of materialism may enable more family togetherness. More indulgence of children may result in less understanding of life’s important values. More substance may mean less gratitude.

Some aspects of life can be significantly enhanced by the notion that more is better. The sacred hymn “More Holiness Give Me” (*Hymns*, no. 131) brings to our remembrance the virtues worthy of more of our attention.

Jesus Himself described what it requires to be “more, Savior, like thee.” He said, “I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48).

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Meekness is vital to becoming more Christ-like. Without it one cannot develop other important virtues. Mormon indicated, “None is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart” (Moroni 7:44).

Acquiring meekness is a process. We are asked to “take up [the] cross daily” (Luke 9:23). Our lifting should not be an occasional exercise. More meekness does not translate to weakness, but “it is the presentation of self in a posture of kindness and gentleness. It reflects certitude, strength, serenity; it reflects a healthy self-esteem and a genuine self-control” (Neal A. Maxwell, “Meekness—A Dimension of True Discipleship,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1983, 70). More meekness will allow us to be tutored by the Spirit.

The virtues expressed in “More Holiness Give Me” fall into several groups. Some are personal goals, like more holiness give me; more strivings within; more faith, gratitude, and purity; more fit for the kingdom; more purpose in prayer; and more trust in the Lord. Others center on adversity. They include patience in suffering, meekness in trial, praise for relief, strength to overcome, freedom from earth stains, and longing for home. The rest firmly anchor us to our Savior: more sense of His care; more pride in His glory; more hope in His word; more joy in His service; more tears for His sorrows; more pain at His grief; more blessed and holy; and more, Savior, like Thee. More of these virtues is better. Less is not desirable, but gratitude for them is.

Many experience joy in His service by teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and its Restoration and testifying of the Savior and His life, ministry, and Atonement.

A missionary district leader was wondering why Elder Parker, who was about to conclude his mission, was successful in spite of his inability to memorize the discussions. To understand, he teamed with Elder Parker to give a discussion. Elder Parker's presentation was so disorganized that by the end of the formal lesson, the district leader was confused and surmised that the family being taught felt the same way.

It was then that "Elder Parker leaned forward and put his hand on the arm of the family's father. He then looked him straight in the eyes, told him how much he loved him and his family, and bore one of the most humble and powerful testimonies that the district leader had ever heard. By the time he finished, every member of the family, including the father, and both elders had tears running down their cheeks. Next Elder Parker taught the father how to pray, and they all knelt down while the father prayed that they might receive testimonies of their own and thanked Heavenly Father for the great love that he felt. Two weeks later the whole family was baptized."

Later, Elder Parker apologized to his district leader for not knowing the discussions. He said he struggled with memorization, even though he spent hours each day working on it. He said he knelt in prayer before teaching each family and asked Heavenly Father to bless him when he bore his testimony so that people would feel his love and the Spirit and know they were being taught the truth (see Allan K. Burgess and Max H. Molgard, "That Is the Worst Lesson I've Ever Heard!" in *Sunshine for the Latter-day Saint Soul* [1998], 181–83).

What can we glean from this simple story?

Do you think Elder Parker felt the need to strive more to learn the discussions? Is it possible Elder Parker came to understand the need to offer prayers with a purpose? Do you suppose his prayers were laced with pleas to gain more strength to overcome? Might the inability to memorize have brought patience in suffering and meekness in trial? Did he demonstrate great faith in the Savior and trust in the Lord? Most certainly he did! He showed gratitude for the Lord for what he didn't have, but also used the gifts that he did have to benefit others.

We show our gratitude by sharing with others. The 2005 hurricane season in the southern United States and the western Caribbean was the costliest and most devastating on record. Storm after storm lashed at homes and businesses from Honduras to Florida. Thousands of priesthood-directed volunteers were there each time a hurricane struck, providing the necessities to sustain life. Hygiene and cleaning kits, food, water, kitchen sets, bed linen, and other commodities helped clean homes and establish temporary housing.

Hundreds of letters of gratitude have been received. One woman, a nurse from Mississippi, wrote: "I was speechless. Had God answered my prayers so quickly? Tears immediately began to roll down my cheeks as men in hard hats and boots, with chainsaws of all shapes and sizes,





appeared out of the debris. It was absolutely, unequivocally, one of the most supreme sacrifices that has ever happened to me personally.”

One 92-year-old great-grandmother has produced several hundred blankets for the victims. In her case, both the creator and receiver have been blessed. As her son admired her handiwork, she asked, “Do you think anyone will ever use one of my blankets?” A letter from a young mother in Louisiana answers that question:

“I live in Louisiana, and I go to a local health unit for my children. While I was there, they gave me some outfits, diapers, wipes, and two beautiful baby blankets. One blanket has a yellow backing with footprints and handprints on the front, and the other blanket is tan with zebras. They are beautiful. My four-year-old loves the zebra one, and of course my seven-month-old can’t say much. I just wanted to say thank you to you and your Church members for your generosity. God bless you and your family.”

In discussing our various longings for more, I am suggesting that it is important for you young people to

**W**ould the blanket ever be used? A letter from a young mother in Louisiana answers that question by saying “thank you for your generosity.”

aggressively seek more of the virtues which go beyond this mortal life and show gratitude for what you do have. A prayerful, conservative approach is the key to successfully living in an affluent society and building the qualities that come from waiting, sharing, saving, working hard,

and making do with what we have. May we be blessed with the desire and the ability to understand when more is really less and when more is better.

*From an October 2004 general conference address.*

## **CHURCH HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES**

Humanitarian efforts continue to bless people around the world. Between the years 2001 and 2006, the Church has:

- Sent hygiene kits and medical supplies to victims of the tsunami in 2004.
- Rebuilt 902 homes, 15 schools, and 3 medical centers in areas damaged by the tsunami.
- Volunteered more than 400,000 man-hours of labor to areas affected by the hurricanes in 2005.
- Provided measles immunizations to six million children in 19 countries.
- Distributed more than 190,000 wheelchairs in 97 countries.
- Provided clean water for over 3.5 million people in 2,600 communities.
- Trained roughly 69,000 health-care workers in neonatal resuscitation.
- Treated vision problems for more than 40,000 people in 35 countries.
- Distributed 55,355 tons of food, 75,102 tons of clothing, 9,334 tons of medical equipment and supplies, and 5,859 tons of educational materials across the globe.