



By Elder M. Russell Ballard
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Be Anxiously Engaged

Great things are brought about and burdens are lightened through the efforts of many hands “anxiously engaged in a good cause.”

Elder Perry, I think you must be the youngest 90-year-old in the whole Church. You noticed how he jumped out of his chair.

My beloved brothers and sisters, each time I enjoy a fresh, vine-ripened tomato or eat a juicy peach right off the tree, my thoughts go back 60 years to when my father owned a small peach orchard in Holladay, Utah. He kept beehives there to pollinate the peach blossoms that would eventually grow into very large, delicious peaches.

Father loved his gentle honeybees and marveled at the way thousands of them working together transformed the nectar gathered from his peach blossoms into sweet, golden honey—one of nature’s most beneficial foods. In fact, nutritionists tell us it is one of the foods that includes all the substances—enzymes, vitamins, minerals, and water—necessary to sustain life.

My father always tried to involve me in his work with his hives, but I was very happy to let him tend to his bees. However, since those days, I have learned more about the highly organized beehive—a colony of about 60,000 bees.

Honeybees are driven to pollinate, gather nectar, and condense

the nectar into honey. It is their magnificent obsession imprinted into their genetic makeup by our Creator. It is estimated that to produce just one pound (0.45 kg) of honey, the average hive of 20,000 to 60,000 bees must collectively visit millions of flowers and travel the equivalent of two times around the world. Over its short lifetime of just a few weeks to four months, a single honeybee’s contribution of honey to its hive is a mere one-twelfth of one teaspoon.

Though seemingly insignificant when compared to the total, each

bee’s one-twelfth of a teaspoon of honey is vital to the life of the hive. The bees depend on each other. Work that would be overwhelming for a few bees to do becomes lighter because all of the bees faithfully do their part.

The beehive has always been an important symbol in our Church history. We learn in the Book of Mormon that the Jaredites carried honeybees with them (see Ether 2:3) when they journeyed to the Americas thousands of years ago. Brigham Young chose the beehive as a symbol to encourage and inspire the cooperative energy necessary among the pioneers to transform the barren desert wasteland surrounding the Great Salt Lake into the fertile valleys we have today. We are the beneficiaries of their collective vision and industry.

The beehive symbol is found in both the interiors and exteriors of many of our temples. This podium where I stand is made from the wood of a walnut tree grown in President Gordon B. Hinckley’s backyard and is adorned with carved beehive images.

All of this symbolism attests to one fact: great things are brought about





and burdens are lightened through the efforts of many hands “anxiously engaged in a good cause” (D&C 58:27). Imagine what the millions of Latter-day Saints could accomplish in the world if we functioned like a beehive in our focused, concentrated commitment to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Savior taught that the first and great commandment is:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37, 39–40).

The Savior’s words are simple, yet their meaning is profound and deeply significant. We are to love God and to love and care for our neighbors as ourselves. Imagine what good we can do in the world if we all join together, united as followers of Christ, anxiously and busily responding to the needs of others and serving those around us—our families, our friends, our neighbors, our fellow citizens.

As the Epistle of James notes, service is the very definition of pure religion (see James 1:27).

We read of the service Church members provide around the world and especially the humanitarian service given in times of crisis—fires and floods and hurricanes and tornadoes. These much-needed and much-appreciated emergency responses should certainly continue as a way

of bearing one another’s burdens. But what about our everyday lives? What would be the cumulative effect of millions of small, compassionate acts performed daily by us because of our heartfelt Christian love for others? Over time this would have a transformative effect upon all of our Heavenly Father’s children through the extension of His love to them through us. Our troubled world needs this love of Christ today more than ever, and it will need it even more in the years ahead.

These simple, daily acts of service may not seem like much in and of themselves, but when considered collectively they become just like the one-twelfth teaspoon of honey contributed by a single bee to the hive. There is power in our love for God and for His children, and when that love is tangibly manifest in millions of acts of Christian kindness, it will sweeten and nourish the world with the life-sustaining nectar of faith, hope, and charity.

What do we need to do to become like the dedicated honeybees and have that dedication become part of our nature? Many of us are dutiful in attending our Church meetings. We work hard in our callings and especially on Sundays. That is surely to be commended. But are our minds and our hearts just as anxiously engaged in good things during the rest of the week? Do we just go through the motions, or are we truly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ? How do we take the seed of faith that has been nurtured in our

minds and plant it deep in the fertile soil of our souls? How do we make the mighty change of heart that Alma says is essential for our eternal happiness and peace? (see Alma 5:12–21).

Remember, honey contains all of the substances necessary to sustain mortal life. And the doctrine and gospel of Christ is the only way to obtain eternal life. Only when our testimony transcends what is in our mind and burrows deep into our heart will our motivation to love and to serve become like unto the Savior’s. It is then, and only then, that we become deeply converted disciples of Christ empowered by the Spirit to reach the hearts of our fellowmen.

When our hearts are no longer set upon the things of this world, we will no longer aspire to the honors of men or seek only to gratify our pride (see D&C 121:35–37). Rather, we take on the Christlike qualities that Jesus taught:

- We are gentle and meek and long-suffering (see D&C 121:41).
- We are kind, without hypocrisy or guile (see D&C 121:42).
- We feel charity toward all men (see D&C 121:45).
- Our thoughts are always virtuous (see D&C 121:45).
- We no longer desire to do evil (see Mosiah 5:2).
- The Holy Ghost is our constant companion, and the doctrines of the priesthood distill upon our souls as the dew from heaven (see D&C 121:45–46).

Now, brothers and sisters, I’m not encouraging religious zealotry or fanaticism. Quite the contrary! I’m simply suggesting that we take the next logical step in our complete conversion to the gospel of Christ by

assimilating its doctrines deep within our hearts and our souls so we will act and live consistently—and with integrity—what we profess to believe.

This integrity simplifies our lives and amplifies our sensitivities to the Spirit and to the needs of others. It brings joy into our lives and peace to our souls—the kind of joy and peace that comes to us as we repent of our sins and follow the Savior by keeping His commandments.

How do we make this change? How do we engrain this love of Christ into our hearts? There is one simple daily practice that can make a difference for every member of the Church, including you boys and girls, you young men and you young women, you single adults, and you fathers and mothers.

That simple practice is: In your morning prayer each new day, ask

Heavenly Father to guide you to recognize an opportunity to serve one of His precious children. Then go throughout the day with your heart full of faith and love, looking for someone to help. Stay focused, just like the honeybees focus on the flowers from which to gather nectar and pollen. If you do this, your spiritual sensitivities will be enlarged and you will discover opportunities to serve that you never before realized were possible.

President Thomas S. Monson has taught that in many instances Heavenly Father answers another person's prayers through us—through you and me—through our kind words and deeds, through our simple acts of service and love.

And President Spencer W. Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he

watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 82).

I know that if you do this—at home, at school, at work, and at church—the Spirit will guide you, and you will be able to discern those in need of a particular service that only you may be able to give. You will be prompted by the Spirit and magnificently motivated to help pollinate the world with the pure love of Christ and His gospel.

And remember, like the little honeybee's one-twelfth teaspoon of honey provided to the hive, if we multiply our efforts by tens of thousands, even millions of prayerful efforts to share God's love for His children through Christian service, there will be a compounding effect of good that will bring the Light of Christ to this ever-darkening world. Bound together, we will bring love and compassion to our own family and to the lonely, the poor, the broken, and to those of our Heavenly Father's children who are searching for truth and peace.

It is my humble prayer, brothers and sisters, that we will ask in our daily prayers for the inspiration to find someone for whom we can provide some meaningful service, including the service of sharing the gospel truths and our testimonies. At the end of each day, may we be able to say yes to the questions: “Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped anyone in need?” (*Hymns*, no. 223).

This is God's work. May we be about it as faithfully as the dedicated little honeybees go about theirs, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Mexico City, Mexico