

# Building a Spiritual and Temporal Refuge

*The pandemic and related shortages, shutdowns, and economic upheaval caused many of us to wonder, How can I be better prepared for the future?*

By Merrilee Browne Boyack

We have been counseled to build a refuge for our families both physically and spiritually. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “As disciples of the Savior, we are commanded to *‘prepare every needful thing’* [Doctrine and Covenants 88:119; emphasis added].” He further taught: “We also are promised that ‘if ye are prepared ye shall not fear’ [Doctrine and Covenants 38:30]. . . . Repeated admonitions to prepare have been proclaimed by leaders of the Church for decades.”<sup>1</sup>

In order to prepare, we can turn to guidance from the Lord. President Russell M. Nelson stated:

“For decades, the Lord’s prophets have urged us to store food, water, and financial reserves for a time of need. . . . I urge you to take steps to be temporally prepared. But I am even more concerned about your spiritual and emotional preparation.”<sup>2</sup>

We know that the last days will not be for the faint of heart. The world will experience

even more upheaval, and the faithful will be tested. President Nelson said: “Of course, we can store our own reserves of food, water, and savings. But equally crucial is our need to fill our personal *spiritual* storehouses with faith, truth, and testimony.”<sup>3</sup>


It will be critical that each of us be prepared not only temporally and physically for what is to come but also spiritually. These have striking parallels in our preparations.



## Water and Living Water

Physically, one of our key needs is to have fresh drinking water stored. For many people, droughts, contaminated water sources, and other water-related problems have caused grave concern. Where possible, it is good to have a supply of water that can last at least a few days until access to drinkable water is restored. (Individuals need about four liters per day for drinking and sanitation.)

Spiritually, we also need a regular supply of the living



water from our Savior, Jesus Christ (see John 4:10). It was telling that the main message given by our prophet when the pandemic struck was to *hear Him*—to hear Jesus Christ through His Spirit and His teachings. President Nelson said:

“In the past several weeks, most of us have experienced disruptions in our personal lives. Earthquakes, fires, floods, plagues, and their aftermaths have disrupted routines and caused shortages of food, staples, and savings. . . .

“As we seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ, our efforts to *hear Him* need to be ever more intentional. It takes conscious and consistent effort to fill our daily lives with His words, His teachings, His truths. . . .

“I renew my plea for you to do *whatever* it takes to increase your spiritual capacity to receive personal revelation.

“Doing so will help you know how to move ahead with your life, what to do during times of crisis, and how to discern and avoid the temptations and the deceptions of the adversary.”<sup>4</sup>

The prophet has repeatedly asked us to increase our ability to receive revelation. It is critical for each of us to

make a deep spiritual effort to access the living water every day so we can hear, receive, and act on personal revelation.



### Food and Spiritual Nourishment

Having an adequate supply of food is also crucial to survive in an emergency. Whether the situation be job loss, natural disasters, or other crises, food storage can help us weather trials. Prophets have encouraged us to put aside food as we are able. Starting with a few weeks' supply can be an important first step in building enough food storage to provide for our families in times of need.

We must also be prepared by making spiritual nourishment a part of our everyday life. President Nelson taught: “Our ultimate quest in life is to prepare to meet our Maker. We do this by striving daily to become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ. And we do *that* as we repent daily and receive His cleansing, healing, and strengthening power. Then we can feel enduring peace and joy, even during turbulent times.”<sup>5</sup>

The parable of the ten virgins teaches this principle clearly. President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the

First Presidency, provided the following perspective:

“The arithmetic of this parable is chilling. The ten virgins obviously represent members of Christ’s Church, for all were invited to the wedding feast and all knew what was required to be admitted when the bridegroom came. But only half were ready when he came. . . .

“ . . . As the Book of Mormon teaches, ‘this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God’ (Alma 34:32). . . . Are we preparing?”<sup>6</sup> We cannot wait until the Lord comes to nourish ourselves spiritually.



### Communication and Prayer

In a crisis, communication is a critical need. During power outages or other disasters, cell phone towers quickly become overwhelmed, and the ability to communicate is seriously impacted. Having a communication plan for family and ward members is an important preparation. How will we reach our family members if our phones don’t work or if we can’t reach them physically? Having a plan in place will help family members know what to do to be able to communicate.

Our Father in Heaven has established His communication plan by encouraging regular prayer. What an honor it is to talk to our Heavenly Father whenever and wherever we want! “Be faithful,” the Savior tells us, “praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom” (Doctrine and Covenants 33:17).

Through our efforts to pray with sincerity, we will become comfortable talking with and receiving guidance from our Father in Heaven, and that will provide a critical connection to guide us and our families in times of need.



### Shelter and Standing in Holy Places

Most of us were asked to “shelter in place” during the pandemic. We learned firsthand that having safe shelter with adequate supplies is crucial to being prepared. It is also wise to seek out alternate shelters in case our homes become unsafe due to natural disasters or other circumstances that require us to leave.

Similarly, we are encouraged to “shelter” in the gospel. President Oaks taught:



“Are we following the Lord’s command, ‘Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly?’ (D&C 87:8). What are those ‘holy places’? Surely they include the temple and its covenants faithfully kept. Surely they include a home where children are treasured and parents are respected. Surely the holy places include our posts of duty assigned by priesthood authority, including missions and callings faithfully fulfilled.”<sup>7</sup>

Members of the Church felt the loss when we were not able to meet together as congregations or to serve in the temple. But we also learned how critical it was to establish our homes as holy places. Attending Church meetings, serving in the temple, and having our homes be sanctuaries of faith will strengthen us and our families as we prepare for the Second Coming.



### First Aid and Repentance

Good first-aid supplies and skills are essential in being temporally prepared. The whole world was looking for good masks and medical supplies during the pandemic. Storing medicine and medical supplies is an important part of being prepared for the natural disasters and other trials that will come.

Similarly, spiritual first aid is essential. The Lord has provided a way for us to be healed. Repentance offers us the opportunity to make things right in our behavior and to have the balm of Jesus Christ and His Atonement

cleanse us. Elder Hans T. Boom of the Seventy stated, “Some of us are wounded, but the first-aid kit of the Lord has bandages big enough to cover all of our wounds.”<sup>8</sup>

Regular repentance will help refine us in preparation for what is to come. As we consistently repent, we will become stronger, better, and more in tune with the Lord. President Nelson taught:

“When Jesus asks you and me to ‘repent,’ He is inviting us to change our mind, our knowledge, our spirit. . . .

“Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. . . . When coupled with faith, repentance opens our access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup>



### Mental Strength and Testimony

Many people struggled with mental health during the pandemic. Part of our preparation includes having practices in place to promote good mental health. Many of us were tested as the trials extended and grew over time. Church leaders have encouraged us to make mental health and strength part of our preparedness.

Spiritually, we must focus on strengthening our testimonies so they will withstand the trials that will come to all the faithful. President Russell M. Nelson stated: “Our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, will perform some of His mightiest works between now and when He comes

again. We will see miraculous indications that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, preside over this Church in majesty and glory. But in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>10</sup>

As the Savior taught, each of us must build our spiritual house upon the rock—which means living in obedience to His teachings—so that we will have a firm foundation (see 3 Nephi 14:24–25). This will be necessary to survive the spiritual buffetings that are sure to come.

As we work to prepare ourselves and the world for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, we must prepare our families temporally for what has been foretold concerning those days. Natural disasters, societal upheavals, and political unrest all await us as foretold by our prophets. These events will require careful preparation to physically protect ourselves and our families.

Likewise, we must protect ourselves and

our families from the evils that would destroy us. Relying on personal revelation; practicing regular habits of spiritual nourishment, including prayer and repentance; and standing in holy places will help us build testimonies that are strong and immovable.

Then we may rest assured in the Lord’s promise that if we are prepared—both temporally and spiritually—we need not fear (see Doctrine and Covenants 38:30). ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “We Will Prove Them Herewith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 9.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Embrace the Future with Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 74.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Message,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 6.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 88, 89, 90.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Message,” 6.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Preparation for the Second Coming,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 8.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, “Preparation for the Second Coming,” 10.
8. Hans T. Boom, “Knowing, Loving, and Growing,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 105.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 96.

