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SOLVING EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS IN THE Lord's Own Way

Our bishops face increasing calls to counsel members with problems that have more to do with emotional needs than with the need for food or clothing or shelter.

My message, therefore, is to the subject: solving emotional problems in the Lord's own way.

Fortunately, the principles of temporal welfare apply to emotional problems as well. . . .

Principles of Self-Reliance

The welfare handbook instructs: “[We must] earnestly teach and urge Church members to be self-sustaining to the full extent of their powers. No true Latter-day Saint will . . . voluntarily shift from himself the burden of his own support. So long as he can, under the inspiration of the Almighty and with his own labors, he will supply himself with the necessities of life” ([1952], 2). . . .

We have succeeded fairly well in teaching Latter-day Saints that they should take care of their own material needs and then contribute to the welfare of those who cannot provide for themselves.

If a member is unable to sustain himself, then he is to call upon his own family, and then upon the Church, in that order. . . .

When people are *able* but *unwilling* to take care of themselves, we are responsible to employ the dictum of the Lord that the idler shall not eat the bread of the laborer. (See D&C 42:42.)

The simple rule has been to take care of one's self. This couplet of truth has been something of a model: “Eat it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.”

When the Church welfare program was first announced in 1936, the First Presidency said:

“. . . *The aim of the Church is to help people help*

themselves” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3; italics added). . . .

It is a self-help system, not a quick handout system. It requires a careful inventory of all personal and family resources, all of which must be committed before anything is added from the outside.

It is not an unkind or an unfeeling bishop who requires a member to work to the fullest extent he can for what he receives from Church welfare.

There should not be the slightest embarrassment for any member to be assisted by the Church. *Provided*, that is, that he has contributed all that he can. . . .

The substance of what I want to say is this: The same principle—self-reliance—has application to the spiritual and to the emotional. . . .

Unless we use care, we are on the verge of doing to ourselves emotionally (and, therefore, spiritually) what we have been working so hard for generations to avoid materially.

Counseling

We seem to be developing an epidemic of “counselitis” which drains spiritual strength from the Church much like the common cold drains more strength out of humanity than any other disease. . . .

Speaking figuratively, many a bishop keeps on the corner of his desk a large stack of order forms for emotional relief.

When someone comes with a problem, the bishop, unfortunately, without a question, passes them out, without stopping to think what he is doing to his people. . . .

Spiritual independence and self-reliance is a sustaining power in the Church. If we rob the members of that, how can they get revelation for themselves? How will they know

there is a prophet of God? How can they get answers to prayers? How can they know for *sure* for themselves? . . .

Application to Families

. . . Fathers are responsible to preside over their families.

Sometimes, with all good intentions, we require so much of both the children and the father that he is not able to do so.

If my boy needs counseling, bishop, it should be my responsibility first, and yours second.

If my boy needs recreation, bishop, I should provide it first, and you second.

If my boy needs correction, that should be my responsibility first, and yours second.

If I am failing as a father, help me first, and my children second.

Do not be too quick to take over from me the job of raising my children.

Do not be too quick to counsel them and solve all of the problems. Get me involved. It is my ministry.

We live in a day when the adversary stresses on every hand the philosophy of instant gratification. We seem to demand *instant* everything, including instant solutions to our problems. . . .

It was meant to be that life would be a challenge. To suffer some anxiety, some depression, some disappointment, even some failure is normal.

Teach our members that if they have a good, miserable day once in a while, or several in a row, to stand steady and face them. Things will straighten out.

There is great purpose in our struggle in life. ■

This excerpt comes from a general conference address originally given in April 1978. Punctuation standardized; subheads added. The full text can be found at liahona.lds.org.

The principle of self-reliance or personal independence is fundamental to the happy life.