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Aiming AT THE CENTER

Recently, I watched a group of people practicing the art of archery. Just by watching, it became clear to me that if you really want to master the bow and arrow, it takes time and practice.

I don't think you can develop a reputation for being an accomplished archer by shooting at an empty wall and then drawing targets around the arrows. You have to learn the art of finding the target and hitting the bull's-eye.

Painting Targets

Shooting first and drawing the target afterward may seem a little absurd, but sometimes we ourselves mirror that very behavior in other circumstances of life.

As Church members, we sometimes have a tendency to attach ourselves to gospel programs, issues, and even doctrines that seem interesting, important, or enjoyable to us. We are tempted to draw targets around them, making us believe we are aiming at the center of the gospel.

This is easy to do.

Throughout the ages we have received excellent counsel and inspiration from prophets of God. We also receive direction and clarification from various publications, handbooks, and manuals of the Church. How easy it would be to select our favorite gospel topic, draw a bull's-eye around it, and then make a case that we have identified the center of the gospel.

The Savior Clarifies

This is not a problem unique to our day. Anciently, religious leaders spent a great deal of time cataloging, ranking,

and debating which of the hundreds of commandments was the most important.

One day a group of religious scholars attempted to draw the Savior into the controversy. They asked Him to weigh in on an issue upon which few could agree.

"Master," they asked Him, "which is the great commandment in the law?"

We all know how Jesus answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"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."¹

Please note the last sentence: "On these two commandments hang *all* the law and the prophets."

The Savior not only showed us the target, but He also identified the bull's-eye.

Hitting the Target

As members of the Church, we covenant to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. Implicit in that covenant is the understanding that we will strive to learn about God, love Him, increase our faith in Him, honor Him, walk in His way, and stand steadfastly as witnesses of Him.

The more we learn about God and feel His love for us, the more we realize that the infinite sacrifice of Jesus Christ is a divine gift of God. And God's love inspires us to use the



path of true repentance, which will lead to the miracle of forgiveness. This process enables us to have greater love and compassion for those around us. We will learn to see beyond labels. We will resist the temptation to accuse or judge others by their sins, shortcomings, flaws, political leanings, religious convictions, nationalities, or skin color.

We will see every one we meet as a child of our Heavenly Father—our brother or our sister.

We will reach out to others in understanding and love—even those who may not be particularly easy to love. We will mourn with those who mourn and comfort those who stand in need of comfort.²

And we will realize that there is no need for us to agonize about the correct gospel target.

The two great commandments are the target. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.³ As we accept this, all other good things will fall into place.

If our primary focus, thoughts, and efforts are centered on increasing our love for Almighty God and extending

our hearts to others, we can know that we have found the right target and are aiming at the bull's-eye—becoming true disciples of Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 22:36–40.
2. See Mosiah 18:9.
3. See Matthew 22:40.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Before sharing this message, you could sing “Our Savior’s Love” (*Hymns*, no. 113). Then consider encouraging those you visit to reflect on the “targets” in their own lives. You could discuss ways to ensure that the two great commandments—to “love the Lord thy God” and to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (see Matthew 22:37, 39)—are always guiding their actions. You might also share specific ways in which you have focused your own life on Christ and share testimony of how that has blessed you.