



*Jesus Christ “taught lessons of love and repeatedly demonstrated unselfish service to others. All were recipients of his love.”*



## Walking the Savior's Path of Charity

*“The touchstone of compassion is a measure of our discipleship; it is a measure of our love for God and for one another.”*

### **From the Life of Howard W. Hunter**

President Howard W. Hunter taught that the Savior “gave us His love, His service, and His life. . . . We should strive to give as He gave.”<sup>1</sup> Most particularly, President Hunter encouraged Church members to follow the Savior’s example of charity in their everyday lives.

Acts of charity were a defining aspect of Howard W. Hunter’s career in the legal profession. A fellow attorney explained:

“He spent a lot of his time giving [free] legal service . . . because he just did not have the heart to send a bill. . . . He was perceived as a friend, guide, counselor, and a professional who was much more concerned about seeing that people got the help they needed than that he got compensated for it.”<sup>2</sup>

Charity was also a hallmark of President Hunter’s Church service. A woman who said he was her most influential teacher explained some of the reasons:

“I have always observed that this man loved others by putting them in high priority, by listening to understand, and by sharing his experiences with others, which was one of his great enjoyments. He has taught me to understand the importance of these virtues and to feel the joy in practicing them.”<sup>3</sup>

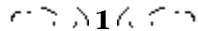
Another woman from President Hunter’s stake in California paid this tribute:

“President Howard W. Hunter was our stake president years ago when our family lived in the Pasadena Stake. My father had died, leaving my mother to rear my older sister and me. Although we were not a prominent family in the stake, which covered a huge geographical area, President Hunter still knew us personally.

“My most significant memory of him is one that contributed to my sense of self-worth. After each stake conference, we would wait in line to shake hands with him. He always took my mother’s hand and said, ‘How are you, Sister Sessions, and how are Betty and Carolyn?’ It gave me a thrill to hear him call us by name. I knew he knew us and cared about our well-being. The memory still warms my heart.”<sup>4</sup>

President Hunter once said, “I feel ours is the mission to serve and to save, to build and to exalt.”<sup>5</sup> Comments from his Brethren in the Twelve show how well he fulfilled that mission. “He has a way of making people feel at ease,” reported one; “he doesn’t dominate them. He is a good listener.” Another said, “When you travel with him, he’s always watching to be sure that everybody is taken care of and that nobody is being inconvenienced or put out.” Still another reported, “He is concerned with and sensitive to others. He has charity and a forgiving heart. He is a student of the gospel, of mankind, of human nature.”<sup>6</sup>

## Teachings of Howard W. Hunter



### **The two great commandments are the Lord’s touchstone for our discipleship.**

In ancient times, one test of the purity of gold was performed with a smooth, black, siliceous stone called a touchstone. When rubbed across the touchstone, the gold produced a streak or mark on its surface. The goldsmith matched this mark to a color on his chart of graded colors. The mark was redder as the amount of copper or alloy increased or yellower as the percentage of gold increased. This process showed quite accurately the purity of the gold.

The touchstone method of testing the purity of gold was quick and was satisfactory for most practical purposes. But the goldsmith who still questioned the purity completed a more accurate test by using a process that involved fire.

I suggest to you that the Lord has prepared a touchstone for you and me, an outward measurement of inward discipleship that marks our faithfulness and will survive the fires yet to come.

On one occasion while Jesus was teaching the people, a certain lawyer approached him and posed this question: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus, the master teacher, replied to the man, who obviously was well-versed in the law, with a counter-question, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

The man replied with resolute summary the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

With approval Christ responded, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:25–28).

Eternal life, God's life, the life we are seeking, is rooted in two commandments. The scriptures say that "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40). Love God and love your neighbor. The two work together; they are inseparable. In the highest sense they may be considered as synonymous. And they are commandments that each of us can live.

The answer of Jesus to the lawyer might be considered as the Lord's touchstone. He said on another occasion, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). He will measure our devotion to him by how we love and serve our fellowmen. What kind of mark are we leaving on the Lord's touchstone? Are we truly good neighbors? Does the test show us to be 24-karat gold, or can the trace of fool's gold be detected?<sup>7</sup>

**The Savior taught us to love everyone, including those who may be difficult to love.**

As if excusing himself for asking such a simple question of the Master, the lawyer sought to justify himself by further inquiring, “And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29).

We all ought to be eternally grateful for that question, for in the Savior’s reply came one of his richest and most appreciated parables, one that each of us has read and heard over and over again:

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

“And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

“And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

“And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

“And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee” (Luke 10:30–35).

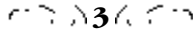
Then Jesus asked the lawyer, “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?” (Luke 10:36). There the Master holds out the touchstone of Christianity. He asks that our mark be measured on it.

Both the priest and the Levite in Christ’s parable should have remembered the requirements of the law: “Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again” (Deuteronomy 22:4). And if an ox, how much more should one be willing to help a brother in need. But as Elder James E. Talmage wrote,

“Excuses [not to do so] are easy to find; they spring up as readily and plentifully as weeds by the wayside” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3d ed., Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916, p. 431).

The Samaritan gave us an example of pure Christian love. He had compassion; he went to the man who had been injured by the thieves and bound up his wounds. He took him to an inn, cared for him, paid his expenses, and offered more if needed for his care. This is a story of the love of a neighbor for his neighbor.

An old axiom states that a man “all wrapped up in himself makes a small bundle.” Love has a certain way of making a small bundle large. The key is to love our neighbor, including the neighbor that is difficult to love. We need to remember that though we make our friends, God has made our neighbors—everywhere. Love should have no boundary; we should have no narrow loyalties. Christ said, “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?” (Matthew 5:46).<sup>8</sup>



### **We should love and serve others in their affliction.**

Joseph Smith wrote a letter to the Saints, published in the *Messenger and Advocate*, on the subject of loving one another to be justified before God. He wrote:

“Dear Brethren:—It is a duty which every Saint ought to render to his brethren freely—to always love them, and ever succor them. To be justified before God we must love one another: we must overcome evil; we must visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and we must keep ourselves unspotted from the world: for such virtues flow from the great fountain of pure religion. Strengthening our faith by adding every good quality that adorns the children of the blessed Jesus, we can pray in the season of prayer; we can love our neighbor as ourselves, and be faithful in tribulation, knowing that the reward of such is greater in the kingdom of heaven. What a consolation! What a joy! Let me live the life of the righteous, and let my reward be like this!” (*History of the Church*, 2:229).



*The Lord “will measure our devotion to him by how we love and serve our fellowmen.”*

These two virtues, love and service, are required of us if we are to be good neighbors and find peace in our lives. Surely they were in the heart of Elder Willard Richards. While in Carthage Jail on the afternoon of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, the jailer suggested that they would be safer in the cells. Joseph turned to Elder Richards and asked, “If we go into the cell will you go with us?”

Elder Richards’ reply was one of love: “Brother Joseph, you did not ask me to cross the river with you—you did not ask me to come to Carthage—you did not ask me to come to jail with you—and do you think I would forsake you now? But I will tell you what I will do; if you are condemned to be hung for ‘treason,’ I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free.”

It must have been with considerable emotion and feeling that Joseph replied, “But you cannot.”

To which Elder Richards firmly answered, “I will” (see B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:283).

Elder Richards’ test was perhaps greater than most of us will face: the test of fire rather than of the touchstone. But if we were asked

to do so, could we lay down our lives for our families? our friends? our neighbors?

The touchstone of compassion is a measure of our discipleship; it is a measure of our love for God and for one another. Will we leave a mark of pure gold or, like the priest and the Levite, pass by on the other side?<sup>9</sup>

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**We need to walk more resolutely the path  
of charity that Jesus has shown.**

In an important message to the Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo just one year before his tragic and untimely martyrdom, the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“If we would secure and cultivate the love of others, we must love others, even our enemies as well as friends. . . . Christians should cease wrangling and contending with each other, and cultivate the principles of union and friendship in their midst.” (*History of the Church*, 5:498–99.)

That is magnificent counsel today, even as it was [then]. The world in which we live, whether close to home or far away, needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. It provides the only way the world will ever know peace. We need to be kinder with one another, more gentle and forgiving. We need to be slower to anger and more prompt to help. We need to extend the hand of friendship and resist the hand of retribution. In short, we need to love one another with the pure love of Christ, with genuine charity and compassion and, if necessary, shared suffering, for that is the way God loves us.

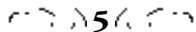
In our worship services, we often sing a lovely hymn with text written by Susan Evans McCloud. May I recall a few lines of that hymn for you?

*Savior, may I learn to love thee,  
Walk the path that thou hast shown,  
Pause to help and lift another,  
Finding strength beyond my own. . . .  
Who am I to judge another  
When I walk imperfectly?*



*In the quiet heart is hidden  
Sorrow that the eye can't see. . . .  
I would be my brother's keeper;  
I would learn the healer's art.  
To the wounded and the weary  
I would show a gentle heart.  
I would be my brother's keeper—  
Lord, I would follow thee.  
(Hymns, 1985, no. 220.)*

We need to walk more resolutely and more charitably the path that Jesus has shown. We need to “pause to help and lift another” and surely we will find “strength beyond [our] own.” If we would do more to learn “the healer’s art,” there would be untold chances to use it, to touch the “wounded and the weary” and show to all “a gentle[r] heart.” Yes, Lord, we should follow thee.<sup>10</sup>



### **Charity is the pure love of Christ and will not fail.**

“A new commandment I give unto you,” [Jesus] said, “That ye love one another; . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:34–35.) This love that we should have for our brothers and sisters in the human family, and that Christ has for every one of us, is called charity or “the pure love of Christ.” (Moro. 7:47.) It is the love that prompted the suffering and sacrifice of Christ’s atonement. It is the highest pinnacle the human soul can reach and the deepest expression of the human heart.

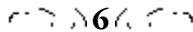
. . . Charity encompasses all other godly virtues. It distinguishes both the beginning and the end of the plan of salvation. When all else fails, charity—Christ’s love—will *not* fail. It is the greatest of all divine attributes.

Out of the abundance of his heart, Jesus spoke to the poor, the downtrodden, the widows, the little children; to farmers and fishermen, and those who tended goats and sheep; to strangers and foreigners, the rich, the politically powerful, as well as the unfriendly Pharisees and scribes. He ministered to the poor, the

hungry, the deprived, the sick. He blessed the lame, the blind, the deaf, and other people with physical disabilities. He drove out the demons and evil spirits that had caused mental or emotional illness. He purified those who were burdened with sin. He taught lessons of love and repeatedly demonstrated unselfish service to others. All were recipients of his love. All were “privileged the one like unto the other, and none [were] forbidden.” (2 Ne. 26:28.) These are all expressions and examples of his unbounded charity.

The world in which we live would benefit greatly if men and women everywhere would exercise the pure love of Christ, which is kind, meek, and lowly. It is without envy or pride. It is selfless because it seeks nothing in return. It does not countenance evil or ill will, nor rejoice in iniquity; it has no place for bigotry, hatred, or violence. It refuses to condone ridicule, vulgarity, abuse, or ostracism. It encourages diverse people to live together in Christian love regardless of religious belief, race, nationality, financial standing, education, or culture.

The Savior has commanded us to love one another as he has loved us; to clothe ourselves “with the bond of charity” (D&C 88:125), as he so clothed himself. We are called upon to purify our inner feelings, to change our hearts, to make our outward actions and appearance conform to what we say we believe and feel inside. We are to be true disciples of Christ.<sup>11</sup>



### **Loving others is “a more excellent way.”**

As a young man, Brother Vern Crowley said he learned something of the crucial lesson the Prophet Joseph had taught the early Saints in Nauvoo when he told them to “love others, even our enemies as well as friends.” This is a good lesson for each of us.

After his father became ill, Vern Crowley took responsibility for running the family wrecking yard although he was only fifteen years of age. Some customers occasionally took unfair advantage of the young man, and parts were disappearing from the lot overnight. Vern was angry and vowed to catch someone and make an example of him. Vengeance would be his.

Just after his father had started to recover from his illness, Vern was making his rounds of the yard one night at closing time. It was nearly dark. In a distant corner of the property, he caught sight of someone carrying a large piece of machinery toward the back fence. He ran like a champion athlete and caught the young thief. His first thought was to take out his frustrations with his fists and then drag the boy to the front office and call the police. His heart was full of anger and vengeance. He had caught his thief, and he intended to get his just dues.

Out of nowhere, Vern's father came along, put his weak and infirm hand on his son's shoulder, and said, "I see you're a bit upset, Vern. Can I handle this?" He then walked over to the young would-be thief and put his arm around his shoulder, looked him in the eye for a moment, and said, "Son, tell me, why are you doing this? Why were you trying to steal that transmission?" Then Mr. Crowley started walking toward the office with his arm around the boy, asking questions about the young man's car problems as they walked. By the time they had arrived at the office, the father said, "Well, I think your clutch is gone and that's causing your problem."

In the meantime, Vern was fuming. "Who cares about his clutch?" he thought. "Let's call the police and get this over with." But his father just kept talking. "Vern, get him a clutch. Get him a throwout bearing, too. And get him a pressure plate. That should take care of it." The father handed all of the parts to the young man who had attempted robbery and said, "Take these. And here's the transmission, too. You don't have to steal, young man. Just ask for it. There's a way out of every problem. People are willing to help."

Brother Vern Crowley said he learned an everlasting lesson in love that day. The young man came back to the lot often. Voluntarily, month by month, he paid for all of the parts Vic Crowley had given him, including the transmission. During those visits, he asked Vern why his dad was the way he was and why he did what he did. Vern told him something of their Latter-day Saint beliefs and how much his father loved the Lord and loved people. Eventually the would-be thief was baptized. Vern later said, "It's hard now to

describe the feelings I had and what I went through in that experience. I, too, was young. I had caught my crook. I was going to extract the utmost penalty. But my father taught me a different way.”

A different way? A better way? A higher way? A more excellent way? Oh, how the world could benefit from such a magnificent lesson. As Moroni declares:

“Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world. . . .

“In the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way.” (Ether 12:4, 11.)<sup>12</sup>

## Suggestions for Study and Teaching

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### *Questions*

- What does President Hunter mean by referring to the two great commandments as “the Lord’s touchstone”? (See section 1.) Reflect on how you would answer the questions President Hunter asks at the end of section 1.
- Review President Hunter’s account of the parable of the good Samaritan (see section 2). What can we learn from these teachings about loving our neighbors? How can we increase our love for those who may be “difficult to love”?
- In section 3, President Hunter teaches that we should love and serve others in their times of affliction. How have you been blessed by someone who has loved and served you in a time of need?
- Ponder President Hunter’s teachings about following the Savior’s example of charity (see section 4). How can we develop greater love for others? What are some ways we can more actively show our love?
- In section 5, President Hunter reviews some of the ways that Christ has shown His love. When have you felt the Savior’s love in your life? What blessings have come as you have “exercise[d] the pure love of Christ”?

- What can we learn from President Hunter’s telling of the story of Vern Crowley? (See section 6.) How can we replace feelings of “anger and vengeance” with feelings of charity? What experiences have helped you learn that charity is “a more excellent way”?

### *Related Scriptures*

Matthew 25:31–46; 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 4:29–32; 1 John 4:20; Mosiah 4:13–27; Alma 34:28–29; Ether 12:33–34; Moroni 7:45–48; D&C 121:45–46

### *Study Help*

“Acting on what you have learned will bring added and enduring understanding (see John 7:17)” (*Preach My Gospel* [2004], 19). Consider asking yourself how you can apply the teachings at home, at work, and in your Church responsibilities.

### **Notes**

1. “The Gifts of Christmas,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2002, 18.
2. John S. Welch, in Eleanor Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter* (1994), 119.
3. Betty C. McEwan, “My Most Influential Teacher,” *Church News*, June 21, 1980, 2.
4. Carolyn Sessions Allen, in “Loved by All Who Knew Him: Stories from Members,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 20.
5. In Thomas S. Monson, “President Howard W. Hunter: A Man for All Seasons,” 33.
6. In Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter*, 185.
7. “The Lord’s Touchstone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 34.
8. “The Lord’s Touchstone,” 34–35.
9. “The Lord’s Touchstone,” 35.
10. “A More Excellent Way,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 61.
11. “A More Excellent Way,” 61–62.
12. “A More Excellent Way,” 62.