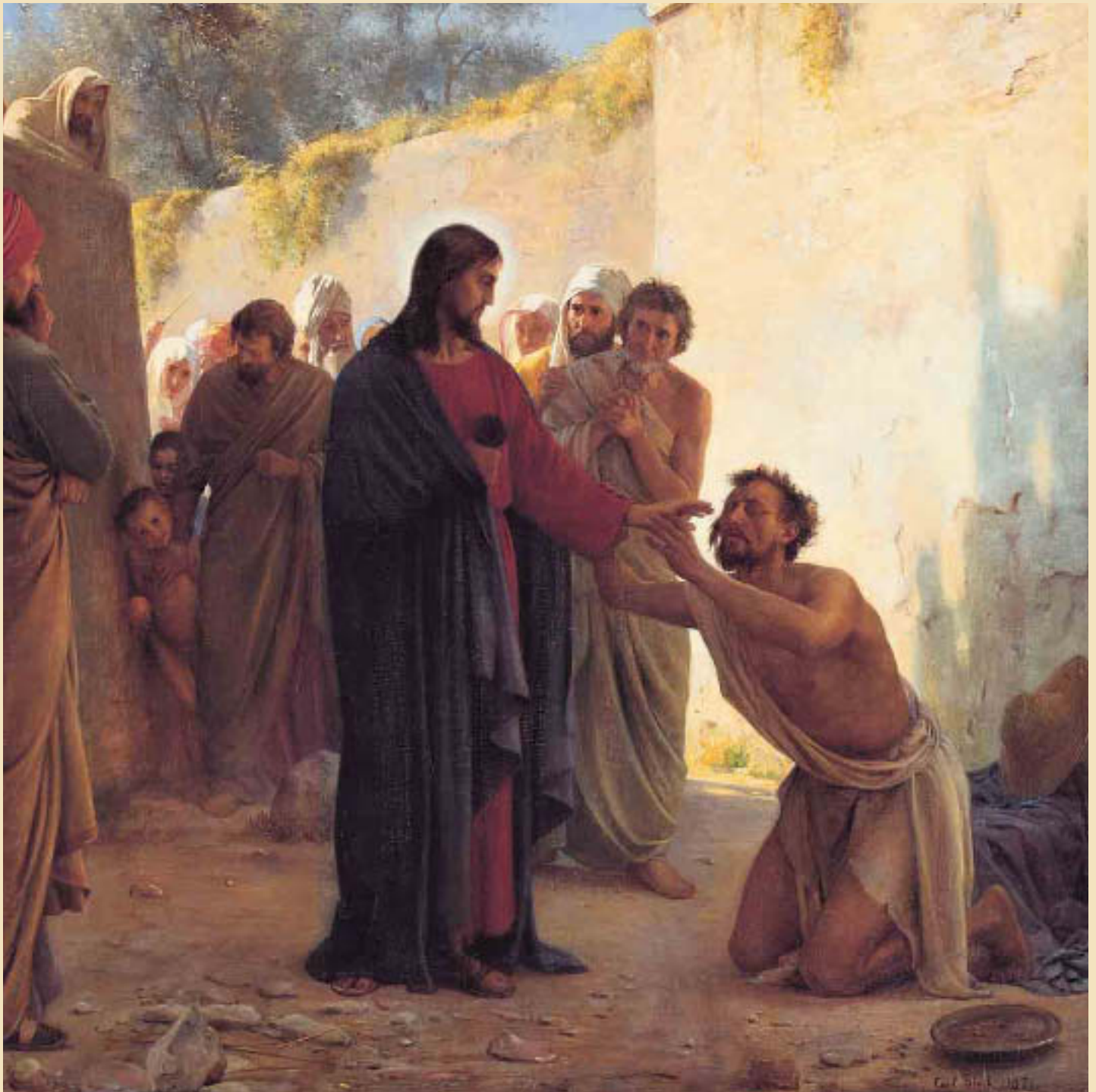


# PURE RELIGION



HOW MEMBERS OF THE  
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
REACH OUT TO THOSE  
IN NEED



BUT HE THAT IS GREATEST AMONG YOU  
SHALL BE YOUR SERVANT.

*Matthew 23:11*



*“Impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.”*

*Book of Mormon, Mosiah 4:26*

When Jesus Christ came to earth, He spent much of His ministry caring for the poor and needy. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and comforted the discouraged. He urged those who would follow Him to do the same.

He taught, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Eighteen centuries later, Joseph Smith, whom God called as a prophet, taught that a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them.”<sup>1</sup>

Today, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints join with millions around the world to help improve the lives of those in need and to help people become self-reliant. They hold sacred this scriptural admonition: “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Mosiah 2:17).



The welfare program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is about giving as well as receiving. Members of the Church are invited to give generously of their time, talents, and resources to help others.

One way that members of the Church assist those in need is by fasting. They abstain from food for two meals on one Sunday of each month and offer the money they would have spent on food to their bishop or branch president, the leader of their local congregation. He uses these funds to bless the lives of those in need.

Fasting, accompanied by prayer, is an ancient practice (see Isaiah 58:6–7). It offers a way for people to draw closer to God, overcome worldliness, gain spiritual strength, become more compassionate, and prepare themselves for service.

*“Think . . . of what would happen if the principles of fast day and the fast offering were observed throughout the world. The hungry would be fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered. Our burden of taxes would be lightened. The giver would not suffer but would be blessed by his small abstinence. A new measure of concern and unselfishness would grow in the hearts of people everywhere.”<sup>2</sup>*

*Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church*

The causes of want are diverse. Sometimes those in need lack sufficient education. Sometimes they become ill or lose their employment. Sometimes they make unwise financial decisions. Some have social, emotional, or spiritual needs.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the bishop is charged with the responsibility to seek out those in need and provide assistance when appropriate. He is helped by the Relief Society, which is the Church's women's organization, and other congregation leaders.

When a bishop assists a family in need, his first priority is to relieve their immediate suffering. The bishop also works to help the family become self-reliant so that, where possible, they no longer need financial or material assistance from others.

To this end, bishops assist needy families with basic necessities. They encourage those who receive assistance to work for what they receive, to get needed training and education, to improve their employment, and to do all they can to become self-reliant so that they, in turn, can help others in need.

Bishops encourage those in need to use their own resources to solve their problems and to seek counsel and aid from other family members. Often, this brings families closer together and strengthens bonds of love and devotion.

*"Our primary purpose was to set up, in so far as it might be possible, a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership."*<sup>3</sup>

*First Presidency of the Church, 1936*





*"The real long term objective of the Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep in the inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this Church."<sup>4</sup>*

*Albert E. Bowen, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, 1937-1953*

The bishop has many resources he can draw upon to help those in need. For example, he may call on Church members, who give freely of their time and talents to assist those who are having financial, physical, or emotional challenges.

The Church operates numerous farms, ranches, canneries, and processing facilities. Church members donate millions of hours at these facilities each year to harvest, process, and package food that will be provided to the poor.

The food and other basic items produced at these facilities are placed on the shelves of many bishops' storehouses located throughout the United States and Canada and in some international locations. These items are then made available to those in need. There are no cash registers at a bishops' storehouse. The only way a person can obtain commodities from a storehouse is through a local bishop's written authorization.

The Church operates Deseret Industries thrift stores, which receive donations of used clothing and household items and then sell them. Deseret Industries stores provide training to many who need help in getting and keeping a job.

LDS Family Services offers counseling to those facing social and emotional challenges and helps couples to build families through adoption.

Those in need of employment can visit Church employment centers throughout the world and receive guidance and training as they seek employment or a better job.

The Church follows the admonition of the Prophet Joseph Smith: "A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."<sup>5</sup>

During the last decade, the Church has shipped thousands of tons of clothing, food, educational materials, and medical supplies throughout the world to help relieve the suffering of millions of God's children in more than 150 countries. Because the Church believes in preparing for times of adversity, it stores food, clothing, and emergency supplies for use in times of emergency. When needs arise, these supplies can be shipped nearly anywhere on earth.

These life-sustaining supplies are shipped to people throughout the world regardless of their race, religion, or political affiliation. As to whom to help, the Church does not ask, "Are you members of our Church?" but rather asks only, "Are you suffering?"

Hundreds of members of the Church volunteer to leave their homes to work with the poor and needy of many nations. Some teach literacy, agriculture, and hygiene. Others work to distribute needed material goods to individuals as well as to other reputable charitable organizations such as the Red Cross or the Salvation Army. Those with medical or specialized training assist local doctors, dentists, social workers, and other professionals. Some offer technical training and help those without employment to find jobs.



*“And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.”*

*Book of Mormon, Alma 1:30*



*“We teach self-reliance as a principle of life, that we ought to provide for ourselves and take care of our own needs. And so we encourage our people to have something, to plan ahead, keep . . . food on hand, to establish a savings account, if possible, against a rainy day.”<sup>6</sup>*

*Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church*

Spencer W. Kimball, President of the Church from 1973 to 1985, taught, “No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able will voluntarily shift the burden of his own or his family’s well-being to someone else.”<sup>7</sup>

Members of the Church believe in a loving Heavenly Father who is always mindful of His children and willing to bless them. But they also believe that they must use the things they receive from Him to take care of themselves and their families as much as possible, or in other words, become self-reliant. One of the benefits of becoming self-reliant is having the opportunity to serve others and help them become self-reliant.

To work toward self-reliance, members of the Church are encouraged to gain knowledge, safeguard their health, seek honorable employment that will support their families, and prepare for times of adversity by storing sufficient food, clothing, and other emergency supplies.

They are encouraged to live within their means and to avoid debt whenever possible. They are taught to keep themselves spiritually, emotionally, and socially strong.

When Maria's husband died, she was left with three children and no job experience. She lived in Utah, where most employers expected her to speak English, but she did not speak a word of English. Before long, she and her family were destitute and about to lose their apartment. Maria went to her bishop, who referred her to the Latter-day Saint Humanitarian Center. There, she began to be trained as a receptionist. Members of the Church offered to come to Maria's home and teach English to her family. The Relief Society brought in food. They picked up the children from school. They taught her how to live on a budget. After a year, Maria accepted a position as a bilingual secretary in a company.

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Two Welfare Services missionaries watched the frail Mongolian woman struggling up the road. She had a burden on her back, and as she approached, they realized she was carrying a child. She had come to ask for help for her eight-year-old son, who had been crippled since birth. Because of his condition he had never been to school, and his mother had carried him on her back wherever he needed to go. He was growing fast, and it was clear that he would soon be too big for her to carry. A medical shipment was on its way from Salt Lake City, but the missionaries had no way of knowing what was in it.

When the containers arrived, the missionaries unloaded each item. To their delight, inside one crate was a child-sized wheelchair. Their hearts swelled with gratitude as they watched this deeply appreciative mother place her son in the new chair. The child soon realized that if he moved the wheels with his hands, he could propel himself. A big smile spread across his face as the full effect of the discovery began to dawn on him. He realized that he would no longer be dependent on someone to move him from place to place. For the first time in his life he was free to move on his own.



*"[Welfare] is not a program, but the essence of the gospel. It is the gospel in action. It is the crowning principle of a Christian life."<sup>8</sup>*

*Spencer W. Kimball, President of the Church, 1973–1985*





*“Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”*

*Matthew 25:37-40*

In the small town of Otavalo, Ecuador, lived a man named Ricardo, who strongly disliked The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It appeared that any time opposition arose against the Church, Ricardo was involved. One day an earthquake hit the Otavalo area and Ricardo's house was destroyed. He appealed for help, first to the city, then to the local churches. But Otavalo is a humble community with few resources. So Ricardo did something he thought he would never do—he came to the house of Rafael Campo, a leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"There is something I would like to talk to you about," Ricardo started. "My house fell down and I don't have the money to fix it. I know we haven't seen eye to eye in the past and I have no right to ask anything of you, but I have no house for my family, and I wondered if your church could help in some small way?" Rafael Campo remembered all the vindictive words and actions of Ricardo over the years, but more powerfully, he remembered the words of the Savior: "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). Rafael thought, "Perhaps it is time to practice what we have taught."

The following Sunday, the bishop explained the situation to some members of the congregation. "We all know this man," the bishop said. "We all know what has happened in the past. But the man does not have a home and he has come to us seeking help." There were 23 men in the meeting that day, and 23 names appeared on the list of those who would help. One offered to bring nails, another to bring some lumber, and another said he could bring 50 cement blocks. Others offered their labor. When Ricardo learned what the Church members had offered to do, he wept. On the appointed day, members of the small congregation gathered and built a sturdy home for a man who only a few days earlier had been an enemy.



Zora Mae was well into her eighties when she heard that in some areas of the world, newborn infants were being taken home from the hospital wrapped not in blankets, but in newspapers.

The thought came to Zora Mae that even though she was legally blind, she could make quilts that would serve better than newspapers. She began to work. She purchased fabric and thread and began making quilts—



dozens of quilts and ultimately, hundreds of quilts. She gave them to people in her neighborhood and community, and she gave them to the Latter-day Saint Humanitarian Center for distribution throughout the world. Zora Mae, now in her nineties, has made more than a thousand quilts. Many have been sent to hospitals in developing countries, where they are being wrapped around newborn babies.



*“What power, what tenderness, what compassion did our Master and exemplar . . . demonstrate. We, too, can bless if we will but follow his noble example. Opportunities are everywhere. Needed are eyes to see the pitiable plight, ears to hear the silent pleadings of a broken heart. Yes, and a soul filled with compassion that we might communicate not only eye to eye or voice to ear, but in the majestic style of the Savior, even heart to heart.”<sup>9</sup>*

*Thomas S. Monson, First Presidency of the Church*

## How You Can Help

*Strengthen yourself and your family.* Consider what your family needs to do to become more self-reliant. Think in terms of health, education, employment, and finances. Are you spiritually, socially, and emotionally strong? Are you prepared for times of adversity? The more self-reliant you become, the more you will be able to help others.

*Look for ways to help close to home.* There are those in need in your own community. They may be hungry, unemployed, or despondent. Find a community resource that addresses the needs, and give of your time, talents, and resources to help. Reach out to a neighbor who is in need.

*Look for ways to foster self-reliance in others.* Think, “How can I help in a way that will not only help someone today, but help them become self-reliant?”

*Contact a reputable charitable agency if you wish to help in international areas.* They can tell you what assistance is needed.

*Consider fasting two meals each month and giving the value of the food to those who are hungry.* If you are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, contribute a generous fast offering.

To learn more about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its welfare program, call 801-240-3001.

### Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, 732.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 52–53.
3. First Presidency, in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3.
4. Albert E. Bowen, *The Church Welfare Plan* (Gospel Doctrine course of study, 1946), 44.
5. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:227.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 50.
7. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 124; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 77.
8. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 123–24; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 77.
9. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 29; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 31.

PURE RELIGION AND  
UNDEFINED BEFORE GOD  
AND THE FATHER IS THIS,  
TO VISIT THE FATHERLESS  
AND WIDOWS IN THEIR  
AFFLICTION, AND TO KEEP  
HIMSELF UNSPOTTED  
FROM THE WORLD.

*James 1:27*

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

*Christ Healing the Blind Man*, by Carl Bloch, used  
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