

# Doing Good to Others

*"Cultivate a spirit of charity; be ready to do for others more than you would expect from them if circumstances were reversed."*

## From the Life of Lorenzo Snow

Lorenzo Snow and his family were part of the Latter-day Saints' initial exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois. With a group of other families, they headed west in the state of Iowa in February 1846. Weather conditions made their trek difficult—day after day they struggled through rain, snow, and mud.

As the Snow family traveled one day, a member of the company asked them for help. Lorenzo Snow wrote in his journal that a man "requested that I would let him put his trunk in my wagon, said he could not get it carried anywhere else." The wagon was "perfectly crowded and as much as seemed we could possibly get along with," Lorenzo recalled, but "still I told him to put it in and come along and share with us."

The next night the family experienced what Lorenzo called "a very unpleasant affair": an axle on their wagon broke. He recounted: "It was then raining very hard and [was] quite cold. We immediately pitched our tent [and] made a good hickory fire. ... The water and mud was very deep and we could not get to the wagon without wading. ... We were now about fifteen miles from the camp and nine or ten to the first house, and none of us being mechanics, the prospect of getting our wagon repaired was not very encouraging."

Unexpectedly, relief came from the man they had helped the day before. "I was lamenting over my misfortune," said Lorenzo, "when he came up to me and informed me that his trade was wagon making and could very easily repair my wagon. ... As soon as the weather would admit, brother Wilson (that being the name of the aforementioned person) went to work and made an axletree much better than the one I broke. Our wagon being repaired, we left this place, having stayed several days on account of rain and mud."

For Lorenzo Snow, this experience reinforced a valuable lesson about service and fellowship. He wrote in his journal, "Granting one favor often leads to obtaining another."<sup>1</sup> [See suggestion 1 on page 264.]

## Teachings of Lorenzo Snow

We are children of the same Heavenly Father, and we have been sent into the world to do good to one another. We are of the same Father in the celestial worlds. ... If we knew each other as we should, ... our sympathies would

## Comments:

This is a difficult expectation. Most of us are plenty willing to do what we would hope someone else would do for us, but for us to be willing to do more than we would want someone else to do for us is a whole new level of charity.

This is a true statement, but the important point here is that he was not looking for a return favor. He was perfectly content to do a good deed just to do good without expectation of repayment.

We are all very fortunate to be on earth at this time. For some reason the Father has reserved us to be alive during this most

be excited more than they are at the present time, and there would be a desire on the part of every individual to study in their own minds how they might do their brethren good, how they might alleviate their sorrows and build them up in truth, how [they might] remove the darkness from their minds. If we understand each other and the real relationship which we hold to each other, we should feel different from what we do; but this knowledge can be obtained only as we obtain the Spirit of life, and as we are desirous of building each other up in righteousness.<sup>2</sup>

We have been sent into the world to do good to others; and in doing good to others we do good to ourselves. We should always keep this in view, the husband in reference to his wife, the wife in reference to her husband, the children in reference to their parents, and the parents in reference to their children. There is always opportunity to do good to one another.<sup>3</sup>

I pray to God, in the name of Jesus, that you and I may try every day to keep a little more faithful, that we may try to be a little better to-day than yesterday, that we may try and have a little more love and affection toward our neighbors, as we are told that upon this hangs the law and the prophets, “to love the Lord, our God, with all our might, with all our mind, and with all our strength, and our neighbor as ourself.” [See Matthew 22:37–40.] “To do unto others as we would have others do unto us.” This is according to the law and the prophets. [See Matthew 7:12.] These are principles we should and must learn. ... We should be friends everywhere and to everybody. There is no Latter-day Saint that hates the world: but we are friends to the world, we are obliged to be, so far as they are concerned. We must learn to extend our charity and labor in the interests of all mankind. This is the mission of the Latter-day Saints – not simply confine it to ourselves, but to spread it abroad, as it of necessity must be extended to all mankind.<sup>4</sup>

Be upright, just and merciful, exercising a spirit of nobility and godliness in all your intentions and resolutions – in all your acts and dealings. Cultivate a spirit of charity; be ready to do for others more than you would expect from them if circumstances were reversed. Be ambitious to be great, not in the estimation of the worldly minded, but in the eyes of God, and to be great in this sense, “Love the Lord our God with all your might, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.” You must love mankind because they are your brethren, the offspring of God. Pray diligently for this spirit of philanthropy, this expansion of

exciting and challenging time in the history of the earth. We may not have a clear idea as to our own potential, but we can imagine what kind of great spirits our brothers and sisters must be to have been saved for the end-time. If we could see their greatness as the Lord sees them, we would be quicker to want to serve them and do whatever was needed to help and save them.

This seems like a simple statement. It is one of those obvious statements we can read and pass over because it is so clearly true. But what we need to remember is that this is the principle upon which we become more like God. All happiness, charity, and goodness are based on this principle.

God is not happy because he is alone and enjoying his personal gain. He is happy because he is able to bring happiness to so many others and share in their joy. Our joy and happiness is also based on our ability to find joy in the happiness of others. When we truly become like God we cannot rest when we see the misery of others, either physically or spiritually. We must do all in our power to assist and encourage others wherever we can. Creating happiness becomes the desire of our existence.

We are not expected to drop all our bad habits by noon tomorrow and be perfect. The goal is just to be better today than we were yesterday, by just a little. It is the effort to be better that is important. The Lord knows we will not become perfect in this life, but we are expected to be better when we leave this life than we are today. To accomplish that requires that each day we think about what we need to do to become better today than we were yesterday. The Lord will aid us in our efforts to be better.

We cannot be good and show kindness to all, for all are our neighbors. The Lord requires that our love and goodness be universal, not selective, just as His love is universal, and not selective.

This is the spirit that Christ has. He was willing to do for us things we could never return in kind. This is true nobility of spirit and heart, to be willing to make sacrifices for others without expectation that there be any reward for doing so. These are sacrifices made out of pure love. This is the kind of action taken by a parent for a child. We just need to extend this kind of love to those we would otherwise deem as perfectly capable beings. This is a more difficult step. A child is helpless, and merits our generosity, but we often don't view our neighbor as being helpless. What we learn over time is that we don't know where our neighbor is helpless, but the Lord knows. If we learn to serve willingly and without question He can bless

thought and feeling, and for power and ability to labor earnestly in the interest of Messiah's kingdom.<sup>5</sup> [See suggestion 2 on page 264.]

**Our happiness increases when we help others find happiness.**

We should have before us a strong desire to do good to others. Never mind so much about ourselves. Good will come to us all right if we keep our minds outside of ourselves to a certain extent, and try to make others happier and draw them a little nearer to the Lord. ... When you find yourselves a little gloomy, look around you and find somebody that is in a worse plight than yourself; go to him and find out what the trouble is, then try to remove it with the wisdom which the Lord bestows upon you; and the first thing you know, your gloom is gone, you feel light, the Spirit of the Lord is upon you, and everything seems illuminated.<sup>6</sup> [See suggestion 3 on page 264.]

**When we look first to the interests of others, we improve more rapidly ourselves.**

One of the best things a young man or a young woman can have in view, in trying to be great, is to have others great also; and not mind spending a little time to improve others. The best way to improve ourselves is to exercise ourselves in doing good to others. Keep this in mind constantly.<sup>7</sup>

In pursuing any kind of study a man has to continue to work, and after going through one course he has to go through again, and keep to work in order to make himself master of them, and he never will master them near so well as by communicating his information while engaged in gaining it. Let him go to work and gather up his friends and endeavor to give them the same knowledge that he has received, and he then begins to find himself being enlightened upon those things which he never would have known unless by pursuing that course of teaching and imparting the information he is in possession of unto others. Any one that has been a school teacher will understand me well upon this point. ...

Let a man remember that there are others that are in darkness and that have not advanced so far in knowledge, wisdom and intelligence, and let him impart that knowledge, intelligence and power unto his friends and brethren, inasmuch as he is farther advanced than they are, and by so doing he will soon discover that his mind will expand, and that light and knowledge which he had gained would increase and multiply more rapidly. ... If you want to secure the friendship and affections of your friends go to work and comfort them with that light which you have received, remembering those blessings came down from God, and that by doing this you are only doing what every man should do. ...

us and them in ways that will surprise us all.

This is classic advice for getting rid of normal depression. When we focus on our own troubles we tend to become depressed, but when we look outside of ourselves at the trouble of others, our troubles don't seem so bad any more. And the act of helping others naturally brings us joy.

If you think of anyone you would consider to be great, chances are they are someone who serves or served other people. If we want to become great in the eyes of the Lord we must become better servants to those around us. The Savior told his apostles that he that would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven would have to first become the greatest servant.

If you really want to learn something, teach it. It is the teacher who learns the most.

D&C 88:78

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

Not all are born to be teachers in the academic sense of the word. Some get in front of a class and just wilt, find themselves tongue tied, and at a loss for words. Fortunately there are many ways to teach. When we teach others we can mentor one on one, we can be a friend, we can demonstrate through example. There are many ways to communicate knowledge. Some can blog or write, others can paint and teach, and others can whittle or farm. The point is that we learn to communicate what we have learned to others, and in so doing we learn and have our own understanding expanded.

Now an individual in order to secure the highest and greatest blessings to himself, in order to secure the approbation of the Almighty, and in order to continually improve in the things pertaining to righteousness he must do all things to the best advantage. Let him go to work and be willing to sacrifice for the benefit of his friends. If he wants to build himself up, the best principle he can do it upon is to build up his friends. ...

... Let your minds be expanded to comprehend and look after the interest of your friends that are around you, and where it is in your power to secure benefits to your friends do so, and in so doing you will find that those things which you need will come into your hands quicker than if you labor entirely to secure them to yourselves independent of regarding the interests of your friends. I know this is a good and important principle.<sup>8</sup> [See suggestion 4 on page 264.]

**When we sacrifice for the good of others, we get heaven within us.**

We have just got to feel ... that there are other people besides ourselves; we have got to look into the hearts and feelings of others, and become more godly than what we are now.

... There is a self sacrifice to be made for the interests of those with whom we are associated. We see this in the Savior, and in brother Joseph, and we see it in our President [Brigham Young]. Jesus, brother Joseph, and brother Brigham have always been willing to sacrifice all they possess for the good of the people; that is what gives brother Brigham power with God and power with the people, it is the self-sacrificing feeling that he is all the time exhibiting. It is so with others; just in proportion as they are willing to sacrifice for others, so they get God in them, and the blessings of the eternal worlds are upon them, and they are the ones that will secure not only the rights of this world but will secure the blessings of eternity. Just in proportion as you ... sacrifice one for another, just in that proportion you will advance in the things of God. Now if you want to get heaven within you and to get into heaven you want to pursue that course that angels do who are in heaven. If you want to know how you are to increase, I will tell you, it is by getting godliness within you.

... Individuals can enjoy heaven around them in all places. We have got to go to work and do this; we must go to work and establish heaven upon this earth, notwithstanding the evils that are around us, the devils that are around us, and notwithstanding the wickedness

This may sound a little selfish, but the Savior says the same thing about those would want to be great in the kingdom of God.

Matthew 23: 11, 12

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

The point is that the Lord wants us to be great in his kingdom because those who are great have learned to be humble, submissive, easily entreated, and are loving and kind. Those are not traits that tend to make for greatness in mortality. So we are discouraged from seeking greatness in the worldly sense, but encourage to seek greatness in the spiritual sense.

Some would call this Karma. The Lord has a unique way of repaying us in kind for the good that we do. President Snow is just spelling it out. If we do good to others, and try to secure good things for ourselves, the good we seek for ourselves will come to us faster if we are doing good to others along the way.

Sacrificing and serving others gives us power with God. It not only gives us power with God, but with other people. We are more likely to love someone who serves us without question or expectation to be paid back. As the scripture says, 1 John 4: 19 "We love him because he first loved us."

Our ability to advance in spiritual things is directly related to our ability to serve others out of the pure joy of performing the service. No payback expected, just joy in serving.

The joys of heaven are not experienced from outside the body, from within the soul. When we behave in a celestial way we receive celestial rewards. This has nothing to do with where we live or how much money we have, but it does have everything to do with our relationship with others and with God. This is

that exists, still we have got to go to work and establish heaven upon this earth.

A person never can enjoy heaven until he learns how to get it, and to act upon its principles. Now you take some individuals, and you refer back to the circumstances that surrounded them 20 years ago, ... when they had a certain amount of joy, of peace, of happiness at that time though things were uncomfortable. Now they may have secured comfortable circumstances and temporal means that would administer to their temporal wants and necessities, but if they have not secured friends, the good feelings of their brethren, they are unhappy, and more so than they were 20 years ago.

... May the Lord bless you brethren and sisters, and may you think of these things and may we love each other, and live so to exalt ourselves as far as the Lord shall give us wisdom and ability and secure confidence with each other.<sup>9</sup> [See suggestion 5 on page 264.]

### **Suggestions for Study and Teaching**

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–vii.

1. Review the story on pages 257 and 259. When have you seen that “granting one favor often leads to obtaining another”?

2. President Snow reminded us that we are all children of God (pages 259–60). How should this knowledge influence our actions toward one another? What opportunities does the Relief Society offer for women to do good to others? What opportunities does a priesthood quorum offer for men to do good to others?

3. Ponder the final paragraph on page 260. Why does our happiness increase when we help others find happiness? How can parents help their children learn this truth?

4. Why do you think we grow in wisdom when we share our knowledge with others? (For some examples, see pages 261–62.) What experiences have you had that have shown you the truth of this principle?

5. Study the section beginning on page 262. Why do you think simple acts of service have the power to bring us closer to heaven? As you ponder the messages in this chapter, think about ways you can make your home a more heavenly place.

Related Scriptures: Matthew 25:31–45; Luke 6:36–38; Mosiah 2:17; 4:14–27; D&C 81:5; 82:3

Teaching Help: “It’s better to take just a few good ideas and get good discussion – and good learning – than to be

why the Lord promises that when we obey the commandments we can have peace within our souls, even when there is chaos and turmoil all around us. Being at peace within and feeling the love of God helps us feel grounded and firm in our decisions and about how we are living our lives.

In this paragraph he is saying that you can be physically uncomfortable, but have people who love you and whom you love in turn and be very happy, even under hard circumstances. You can also have an easy living, all the comforts, but no friends and no one who loves you and be miserable.

frenzied, trying to teach every word in the manual. . . . An unrushed atmosphere is absolutely essential if you are to have the Spirit of the Lord present in your class" (Jeffrey R. Holland, "Teaching and Learning in the Church," *Ensign*, June 2007, 91).

**Notes**

1. Journal of Lorenzo Snow, 1841-47, Church History Library, 39-42.
2. Deseret News, Jan. 28, 1857, 371.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1899, 2.  
Chapter 2  
265
4. Salt Lake Daily Herald, Oct. 11, 1887, 2.
5. In Eliza R. Snow Smith, Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow (1884), 486-87.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1899, 2-3.
7. Improvement Era, July 1901, 714.
8. Deseret News, Mar. 11, 1857, 3; in the original source, page 3 is incorrectly labeled as page 419.
9. Deseret News, Mar. 11, 1857, 4