

Self-Reliance

Stake Conference, April 30, 2017

Mike Baird

Intro – What is self-reliance?

- If I were to ask you "What is Self-Reliance?" – what is it that comes into your mind?
- Most people think of some variation of food storage
- Well, that is part of it, but the answer as to what it is and why it is important may just surprise you a bit
- Because of the perception of what self-reliance is when you mention "I will be speaking on self-reliance" you don't always get the most enthusiastic responses:
 - When I told my wife Nancy my topic today she said "hmmmmm, how are you going to keep everyone awake?"
 - Then yesterday she asked me how my talk preparation was coming and if I was going to do cart wheels in the middle of my talk.
- Fortunately for everyone I won't be doing that
- Before I get into the what and why of self-reliance I would like to inform you of something
- In North America the church is rolling out a self-reliance initiative that has been in place in other parts of the world.
- The rollout in our stake has started
 - We have a stake self-reliance committee that has just been trained
 - Beginning this week we are training the ward councils in the stake about the initiative
 - You will be hearing much more about this in the coming weeks
 - If you go to the church website and search for "self-reliance" the top-hit will take you to the Self-Reliance Services site on lds.org that discusses what we will be doing as part of this initiative:
<https://www.lds.org/topics/pef-self-reliance?lang=eng&old=true>

- **The WHAT:**
- So what is self-reliance really then?
- 2 quotes on the self-reliance site on lds.org
 - Handbook 2
 - " Self-reliance is the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family"
 - Thomas S Monson
 - " [Self-reliance] is an essential element in our spiritual as well as our temporal well-being."
- We traditionally would just think of the temporal portion of self-reliance
 - Home storage
 - Education
 - Health
 - Employment
 - Finances
- Notice what the definition says and doesn't say however:
 - Spiritual and temporal
- In the D&C the Lord has said
 - D&C 104:15
 - " it is my purpose to provide for my saints"
- And he followed this in the next verse by saying
 - D&C 104:15
 - " But it must needs be done in mine own way"
- To be provided for "His way" means:
 - "we must accept and live the principles of self-reliance, which include the following
- Listen as I list off 12 principles as to what strikes you about this list

1. Exercise Faith in Jesus Christ ([D&C 104:15](#))
2. Use Time Wisely ([Alma 34:32](#))
3. Be Obedient ([D&C 130:20–21](#))
4. Manage Money ([D&C 104:78](#))
5. Work: Take Responsibility ([D&C 42:42](#); [2 Nephi 2:16, 26](#))
6. Solve Problems ([Ether 2:18–19, 23](#); [3:1, 4](#))
7. Become One, Work Together ([Moses 7:18](#); [D&C 104:15–17](#))
8. Communicate: Petition and Listen ([D&C 8:2](#))
9. Persevere ([Hebrews 12:1](#); [D&C 58:4](#))
10. Show Integrity ([Mosiah 4:28](#); [Job 27:5](#); [Articles of Faith 1:13](#))
11. Seek Learning and Education ([D&C 88:118–119](#))
12. Stay On Task, Receive Ordinances ([D&C 84:20](#); [D&C 136:4](#); [1 Nephi 18:2–3](#))

(<https://www.lds.org/topics/pef-self-reliance/principles?lang=eng&old=true>)

- What did you note about this list?
- The thing I noticed is that the principles are a balance of spiritual and temporal principals
- They reflect the definition that I read just a few minutes ago
 - Handbook 2
 - "Self-reliance is the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family"

The WHY:

The Celestial Nature of Self Reliance

- So *why* is it that since the beginning have the prophets taught that we need to be self-reliant?
- Why is the church putting so much emphasis on self-reliance initiative?
- Self-reliance is very closely tied to that most precious gift that the war in heaven was fought over – our freedom and agency
- We need to strive, to the best of our ability, to become self-reliant and not depend upon others for our existence
- If we become financially, emotionally, spiritually or otherwise dependent upon the government, our parents, our bishops we run the risk of our freedom and agency becoming limited
- I recognize that there are some of us for no reason of our own cannot become self-reliant in certain areas
- Robert D Hales
"This great principle does not deny to the needy nor to the poor the assistance they should have. The wholly incapacitated, the aged, the sickly are cared for with all tenderness, but every able-bodied person is enjoined to do his utmost for himself to avoid dependence"

All can help – and need help

- We are all self-reliant in some areas and dependent in others.
- We all then should strive to help each other in the areas where we are strong
- And at the same time not let pride prevent us from graciously accepting help when we have a real need

My parents example

- My parents through examples of work and service taught me what it meant to be self-reliant both spiritually and temporally
- My mom grew up on a dairy farm. By the time she was a teenager her older brothers had left. So she worked with my grandpa milking cows, hauling hay, gathering eggs and so forth.
- My dad grew up working as a carpenter's helper in my grandpa's construction business
- He converted to the church when I was about 5 years old

Mom and gleaning the orchards

- When I was in grade school we were poor, very poor
- Dad went to college when I was in 2nd grade - oldest of 4 children
- My mother was 22 years old and my father 24 when he started
- I remember my dad taking me with to ward service projects to pick the fruit in the church orchards
- I also remember my mother taking me with her as she gleaned those same church fruit orchards after they were picked
- Bright memory about 5th grade – the cherry tree
- Mom's memory of it:

"I remember that moment of you in the cherry tree definitely a heart memory of your excited shakes and laughter as I was pounded with cherries. 'Need more, mom?' We ate and ate and canned and canned that day."

- My mother taught me to do what you need to do to take care of yourself

Dad and the basketball hoop

- He had taught me about carpentry through helping him
- Summer after my freshman year in school
- New house and I wanted a basketball hoop on the garage over the driveway
- My dad had told me to build the hoop and put it up since I knew how.
- I had built the hoop itself but didn't know how to get it attached to the roof since I had no way to get up there
- Told Dad we don't have a ladder so I can't do it
- "No such thing as Can't, now go out there and figure out how and do it"
- A bit angry because "he didn't understand"
- Backed my pickup onto the driveway and crawled up on the top of the cab and did it.
- Through this and other experiences he taught me to use what I knew to provide for myself

Spiritual nature of self-reliance

- Self-Reliance is not an end but a means to an end
- It is possible for a person to become completely independent yet lack every other desirable attribute
- We must have some spiritual goal attached to this independence or it can canker the soul
 - Marion G Romney
 - " One may become wealthy and never have to ask anyone for anything, but unless there is some spiritual goal attached to this independence, it can canker his soul."(October General Conference 1981)
- We are to be self-reliant both temporally and spiritually
- Yet we must understand that all these things are spiritual to the Lord
- D&C 29:34-35
 - Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal....
 - "Behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him, for my commandments are spiritual.
 - Tells us that all things are spiritual to the Lord
 - President David O McKay speaking of the welfare program said:
- David O McKay
 - " ... but after all is said and done, the greatest blessings that will accrue from the Church [welfare program] are spiritual. Outwardly, every act seems to be directed toward the physical: re-making of dresses and suits of clothes, canning fruits and vegetables, storing foodstuffs, choosing of fertile fields for settlement—all seem strictly temporal, but permeating all these acts, inspiring and sanctifying them, is the element of spirituality." (Conference Report, Oct. 1936, p. 103.)

D&C 29 also tells us:

- We are to be "an agent unto ourselves".
- We cannot be an agent unto ourselves if we are not self-reliant
- Independence and self-reliance are critical to spiritual growth
- If we are in a situation that threatens or limits our self-reliance we will find our agency threatened or limited
- If we increase our dependence and self-reliance we will find an immediate decrease in our freedom to act
- Self-reliance then is a pre-requisite to the complete freedom to act
- However, there is nothing spiritual in self-reliance unless we make the right choices with that freedom
- What do we do then? How do we make what we think of as temporal things spiritual?
- Marion G Romney
"The key to making self-reliance spiritual is in using the freedom to comply with God's commandments. The scriptures are very clear in their command that it is the duty of those who have to give to those who are in need." (October General Conference 1981)
- The scriptures are full of commandments regarding our obligation to care for the poor and needy
- Moshiah 4:26
"I would that ye should 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"
- Related to the scriptures that tell us to take care of the poor and needy is this scripture:
- Matt 10:39
"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Self-reliant so we can serve

- How is it that these two scriptures relate to each other and self-reliance?
- We "lose" our life by serving and lifting others, by giving of ourselves and our means
- Only when we are self-reliant can we truly emulate the Savior in serving others
- Service is not something we endure or something we do to rack up points on our celestial scorecard
- When we do service - it is in the doing of that service that we become like the Savior
- To tie it all together let me quote again from Elder Marion G Romney

- Marion G Romney
"Can we see how critical self-reliance becomes when looked upon as the prerequisite to service, when we also know service is what Godhood is all about?
Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak." (October General Conference 1981)

- There is interdependence between those who have and those who do not.
- The process of giving and serving exalts those who do not have and humbles those who do have.
- In the process both are sanctified
 - Those who do not have are released from bondage and are more able to act to their potential both temporally and spiritually
 - Those who have by imparting participate in the principle of giving
- Once a person has been made whole or self-reliant, he reaches out to the aid of others and the cycle repeats itself
- We see this when we truly are a ward family and fellow saints

Close

- Gratitude
- Testify of the principles
- Testify of the Savior

LDS Self-reliance Services web site:

<https://www.lds.org/topics/pef-self-reliance?lang=eng&old=true>

Other links:

<https://www.lds.org/liahona/2011/06/catching-the-vision-of-self-reliance?lang=eng>

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1975/08/self-reliance?lang=eng>

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1978/05/solving-emotional-problems-in-the-lords-own-way?lang=eng>

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1982/11/the-celestial-nature-of-self-reliance?lang=eng>

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1986/05/catching-the-vision-of-self-reliance?lang=eng>

<https://www.lds.org/liahona/1997/10/self-reliance?lang=eng>