



By Elder Carl B. Pratt
Of the Seventy

The Lord's Richest Blessings

As we pay our tithing faithfully, the Lord will open the windows of heaven and pour out upon us His richest blessings.

I am grateful for righteous ancestors who taught the gospel to their children in the home long before there were formal family home evenings. My maternal grandparents were Ida Jesperson and John A. Whetten. They lived in the small community of Colonia Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. The Whetten children were taught by precept and by observing the examples of their parents.

The early 1920s in Mexico were hard times. The violent revolution had just ended. There was little cash circulating, and most of it was in silver coins. People often conducted their business through barter, or exchange of goods and services.

One day toward the end of summer, Grandpa John came home, having completed a trade and having received as part of the deal 100 pesos in silver coins. He gave the money to Ida with instructions it was to be used to cover the upcoming school expenses of the children.

Ida was grateful for the money but reminded John that they had not paid any tithing all summer long. They had had no cash income, but Ida reminded him that the animals had

provided meat, eggs, and milk. Their garden had provided an abundance of fruits and vegetables, and they had made other trades for goods not involving cash. Ida suggested they should give the money to the bishop to cover their tithing.

John was a little disappointed, as the cash would have helped a great deal toward the children's schooling, but he readily agreed they needed to pay their tithing. He carried the heavy bag to the tithing office and settled with the bishop.

Shortly afterward he received word that a wealthy businessman from the United States, a Mr. Hord, would arrive the next week with several men to spend a few days in the mountains hunting and fishing.

Grandpa John met the party of men at the railroad station not far from Colonia Juárez. He had the string of saddle horses and the necessary pack animals ready to transport the baggage and camp equipment into the mountains. The following week was spent guiding the men and caring for the camp and the animals.

At the end of the week, the men returned to the railroad station to take

the train back to the United States. John was paid that day for his work and was given a bag of silver peso coins to cover the other expenses. Once John and his men had been paid, John returned the balance of money to Mr. Hord, who was surprised, as he had not expected any money to be left over. He quizzed John to make sure all costs had been covered, and John answered that all the expenses for the trip had been met, and this was the balance of the funds.

The train whistled. Mr. Hord turned to go and then turned back and tossed the heavy bag of coins to John. "Here, take this home for your boys," he said. John caught the bag and headed back to Colonia Juárez.

That evening as the family gathered around after supper to hear the stories of the trip, John remembered the bag and brought it in and set it on the table. John said he didn't know how much was in the bag, so for fun the bag was emptied onto the table—it was quite a pile—and when it was counted, it came to exactly 100 pesos in silver. Of course it was deemed a great blessing that Mr. Hord had decided to make that trip. John and his boys had earned good wages, but the 100 pesos left over was a reminder of the exact same amount of tithing paid the week before. To some, that might be an interesting coincidence, but to the Whetten family, it was clearly a lesson from the Lord that He remembers His promises to those who faithfully pay their tithing.

As a child I loved that story because it was about a horseback camping trip into the mountains for hunting and fishing. And I loved it because it teaches that when we obey commandments we are blessed. There



are several things we can conclude about tithing from this story.

First, you will notice that the payment of tithing in this case was not related to the amount of cash income. The Whettens decided to use their first cash income for tithing because they had lived well from their animals and their productive fruit and vegetable garden. They obviously felt indebted to the Lord for their blessings.

That is a reminder of the implication in the Lord's words when He asks: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me." The people ask, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" And the Lord thunders back, "In tithes and offerings" (Malachi 3:8). Yes, brothers and sisters, just as John and Ida Whetten realized that summer decades ago, we are all indebted to the Lord. Let us not be accused of robbing God. Let us be honest and pay our debts to the Lord. All He asks is 10 percent. Integrity in paying our debts to the Lord will help us be honest with our fellowmen.

The next thing I notice about that story is that my grandparents paid tithing regardless of the poor condition of their family finances. They knew the Lord's commandment; they likened the scriptures unto themselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23–24) and obeyed the law. This is what the Lord expects of all His people. He expects us to pay tithing not from our abundance nor from the "leftovers" of the family budget but, as He commanded anciently, from the "firstlings" of our income, be it scarce or abounding. The Lord has commanded, "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first . . . fruits" (Exodus 22:29). It has been my personal experience that the surest way to pay tithing faithfully is to pay it as soon as I receive any income. In fact, I've found it to be the only way.

We learn from my Whetten grandparents that tithing is not a matter of money, really; it is a matter of faith—faith in the Lord. He promises blessings if we obey His commandments. Clearly, John and Ida Whetten

showed great faith in paying their tithing. Let us show our faith in the Lord by paying our tithing. Pay it first; pay it honestly. Teach our children to pay tithing even on their allowance or other income, and then take them with us to tithing settlement so they know of our example and our love for the Lord.

There is a possibility of misinterpretation in this story from my grandparents. We might conclude that since we pay tithing with money, the Lord will always bless us with money. I tended to think that way as a child. I have since learned it doesn't necessarily work that way. The Lord promises blessings to those who pay their tithing. He promises to "open . . . the windows of heaven, and pour . . . out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). I testify that He fulfills His promises, and if we faithfully pay our tithing, we will not lack for the necessities of life, but He does not promise wealth. Money and bank

accounts are not His richest blessings. He blesses us with wisdom to manage our limited material resources, wisdom that enables us to live better with 90 percent of our income than with 100 percent. Thus, faithful tithing payers understand provident living and tend to be more self-reliant.

I have come to understand that the Lord's richest blessings are spiritual, and they often have to do with family, friends, and the gospel. He often seems to give the blessing of a special sensitivity to the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, especially in marriage and family matters like raising children. Such spiritual sensitivity can help us enjoy the blessings of harmony and peace in the home. President James E. Faust suggested that the payment of tithing is "an excellent insurance against divorce" ("Enriching Your Marriage," *Liahona*, Apr. 2007, 5; *Ensign*, Apr. 2007, 7).

The payment of tithing helps us develop a submissive and humble heart and a grateful heart that tends to "confess . . . his hand in all things" (D&C 59:21). Tithing fosters in us a generous and forgiving heart and a charitable heart full of the pure love of Christ. We become eager to serve and bless others with an obedient heart, submissive to the Lord's will. Regular tithing payers find their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ strengthened, and they develop a firm, abiding testimony of His gospel and of His Church. None of these blessings are monetary or material in any way, but surely they are the Lord's richest blessings.

I testify that as we pay our tithing faithfully, the Lord will open the windows of heaven and pour out upon us His richest blessings. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Elder Lynn G. Robbins
Of the Seventy

What Manner of Men and Women Ought Ye to Be?

May your efforts to develop Christlike attributes be successful so that His image may be engraven in your countenance and His attributes manifest in your behavior.

To be, or not to be" is actually a very good question.¹ The Savior posed the question in a far more profound way, making it a vital doctrinal question for each of us: "What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as *I am*" (3 Nephi 27:27; emphasis added). The first-person present tense of the verb *be* is *I Am*. He invites us to take upon us His name and His nature.

To become as He *is*, we must also *do* the things He *did*: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must *do* in my church; for the works which ye have seen me *do* that shall ye also *do*" (3 Nephi 27:21; emphasis added).

To *be* and to *do* are inseparable. As interdependent doctrines they reinforce and promote each other. Faith inspires one to pray, for example, and prayer in turn strengthens one's faith.

The Savior often denounced those who *did* without *being*—calling them hypocrites: "This people honoureth

me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mark 7:6). To *do* without to *be* is hypocrisy, or feigning to be what one is not—a pretender.

Conversely, to *be* without to *do* is void, as in "faith, if it hath not works, is *dead*, being alone" (James 2:17; emphasis added). *Be* without *do* really isn't *being*—it is self-deception, believing oneself to be good merely because one's intentions are good.

Do without *be*—hypocrisy—portrays a false image to others, while *be* without *do* portrays a false image to oneself.

The Savior chastised the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithing"—something they *did*—"of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matthew 23:23). Or in other words, they failed to *be* what they should *have been*.

While He recognized the