

# Meeting Economic Challenges

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*"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).*

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*Economic challenges can teach lessons and bring blessings.*

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## Most People Will Have Times of Financial Difficulty

Describing worldwide economic conditions today, Elder James E. Faust said: "Many countries of the world have moved into more difficult economic times. Some people are losing their employment and their hard-earned possessions. Others are faced with a lack of food and clothing. In a normal lifetime most people have had, or will face, difficult economic times. . . .

"Aside from the economic tides which run in the affairs of nations, financial hard times can befall any of us at any time. There is no guarantee against personal hard financial times. Financial difficulty may result from several kinds of misfortunes, including all types of natural disasters such as floods, fires, and earthquakes. Accidents and illness can produce unexpected and staggering medical and hospital bills. The misfortunes of other members of our own family may require our help. Unemployment and inflation can quickly wipe away hard-earned savings" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, pp. 127–28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, pp. 87–88).

The scriptures contain examples of economic hardships over which the people had little or no control. Economic hardship resulted from the wickedness of others (see Genesis 18:20–23 and 39:7–20); from the death of a loved one (see Ruth 1); from extreme weather conditions (see Genesis 41:53–57); from natural disasters (see 3 Nephi 8:5–17); from war (see Alma 16:1–3); and from unwise government leaders (see Mosiah 29:17–23).

Economic hardships that could be controlled are also found in scriptures. Vanity (see Proverbs 13:11), greed (see Proverbs 15:27), pride (see Proverbs 16:18), and debt (see Proverbs 22:7) are all manageable causes of financial problems.

READ: Luke 12:15–21. What did Jesus say about covetousness? How is covetousness evident in our lives today?

## **Our Attitude Can Make a Difference**

Our attitude often determines how we cope with financial difficulties and their long-term effects. Elder Faust explained: "Discouragement and frustration are frequent companions to misfortune. Economic problems occasionally put a strain on family relationships. They often require us to do without things we feel we want or need. What can be a calamity for one can be an opportunity for another. . . .

"Elder LeGrand Richards told this story to a young person who in a time of desperation asked what youth have to live for:

" ' ' You remember the story of the two buckets that went down in the well; as the one came up, it said, 'This is surely a cold and dreary world. No matter how many times I come up full, I always have to go down empty.' Then the other bucket laughed and said, 'With me it is different. No matter how many times I go down empty, I always come up full.' " ' (In Conference Report, Apr. 1951, p. 40.)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 128; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 88).

The scriptures contain gospel principles that can guide our attitudes about money and material things. (See Job 1:21; Matthew 6:19–21, 33; 2 Nephi 9:30, 51; Jacob 2:17–19; Alma 39:14.)

President Joseph F. Smith explained: "You must continue to bear in mind that the temporal and spiritual are blended. They are not separate. One cannot be carried on without the other, so long as we are here in mortality" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 208).

## **We Can Learn to Cope with Economic Stress**

Elder Faust has suggested the following ways to help people cope with economic stress:

1. *Seek first the kingdom of God.* This includes payment of tithes and a generous fast offering, loving our neighbor as ourselves (see James 2:8), and keeping the other commandments. Elder Faust explained: "Spiritual strength comes from many sources, including personal prayer, the study of the scriptures, and the willingness to 'submit to all things . . . the Lord seeth fit to inflict' (Mosiah 3:19)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 130; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 89).
2. *Solidify family strengths and resources.* To become unified, families should pray together, budget money together, hold family councils, store a year's supply of necessities, organize the family, and maintain an eternal perspective rather than concentrating on worldly possessions and wealth.

3. *Exercise faith.* (See Mark 9:23 and D&C 90:24.) "A belief that 'all these things shall give thee experience, and . . . be for thy good' is like a spiritual stabilizer (D&C 122:7)" (James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 130; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 90).
4. *Be adaptable in your work.* Be willing to learn new, marketable skills.
5. *Avoid debt.*
6. *Reduce expense.* "When there is limited money available, it is easier to teach children the wise use of money, including the need to save for the future," said Elder Faust. (In Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 130; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 90.)

### Blessings Are Available as We Overcome Financial Hardship

Elder Faust outlined some of the blessings available as we overcome economic adversity:

"First, and perhaps most important, our faith and testimony can be strengthened. . . . Second, we may learn the need for humility. . . . Third, family members learn cooperation and love for each other by being forced to draw closer together to survive. Fourth, personal dignity and self-respect may be achieved. . . . Fifth, we can become stronger and more resilient. . . . Sixth, we learn patience. . . . Seventh, we rise to heights previously unobtainable by the use of talents and skills which might not have been developed otherwise. . . . Eighth, we can learn to trust the Lord and thus overcome fear" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 129; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 89).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell said: "An economic depression would be grim, but it would not change the reality of immortality. The inevitability of the second coming is not affected by the unpredictability of the stock market. . . . A case of cancer does not cancel the promises of the temple endowment. . . .

"All that matters is gloriously intact. The promises are in place. It is up to us to perform" ("*Notwithstanding My Weakness*" [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981], p. 57).

Elder Faust concluded: "From the refiner's fire of economic difficulty may come eternal blessings which can help save families and exalt their members by their being united and strengthened" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 131; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 90).

### Additional Resources for Personal and Family Use

Junior Wright Child, "Home Storage—How to Begin," Apr. 1986, pp. 64–65.

Thomas S. Monson, "Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare," *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, pp. 2-5.

"Provident Living: A Way of Life," *Ensign*, Aug. 1987, p. 35.

Sally Hancock Seil, "Tips for Managing Money," *Ensign*, Aug. 1987, p. 55.

"Using Our Finances and Resources Wisely," *Ensign*, July 1987, p. 55.

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### **Suggestions for Teachers**

1. What gospel principles should guide our attitudes about money and material things? Why is it important to understand that the temporal and spiritual are not separate? How can having an eternal perspective and faith in the Lord help us in times of economic setback? Why is our attitude a factor when we must accept less than we hope for?
2. Identify various reasons for economic stress, as mentioned in the scriptures and by Elder Faust. Include practices such as overspending and unwise use of credit. Why is it important to work toward becoming financially independent and self-reliant?
3. Discuss the six ways that Elder Faust outlined to help us cope with economic stress. In what ways can financial hardship unite and strengthen families?
4. Discuss the eight blessings that Elder Faust said can come from economic adversity. Invite sisters to share examples of blessings obtained from such adversity in their own lives.
5. Conclude by pointing out the principles and promises from the statements of Elder Maxwell and Elder Faust at the end of the lesson.