

## **DEVELOPING FAITH, A REASONABLE SERVICE**

by Mildred Smith, Lamoni, Iowa

*"I beseech you ... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

Developing faith as a reasonable service may seem strange to you as it did to me when I was assigned the topic for a retreat. Then the scripture came to mind, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." You know that familiar scripture written by the author of the Hebrew letter so long ago. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6). So, if we are to do a reasonable service for our Lord, we surely will need to please Him; and the scriptures say to please Him we must have faith. Just believing He is God is not enough. James tells us (James 2:19), "Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble; thou hast made thyself like unto one of them, not being justified."

Matthew and Mark both tell the story of the man who brought his son to the disciples to be healed. Jesus was not there. He, with Peter, James and John, was just returning from the mount of transfiguration when they saw a multitude of people gathered around the other disciples and some Scribes who were questioning them. When the multitude saw Jesus they ran to him. But Jesus singled out the Scribes and asked what it was they wanted to know of His disciples.

Before they could respond, a man in the crowd dropped to his knees in front of Jesus and cried, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed. He has a dumb spirit that is a devil and when it seizes him, it tears him and makes him foam at the mouth, gnash his teeth and pine away. I asked your disciples to heal him, but they could not."

Jesus groaned in Himself, "O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" And then to the father he said, "Bring him to me."

As soon as the troubled one saw Jesus, the evil spirit tore him, threw him on the ground and he lay foaming and wallowing in the dirt. Jesus asked, "How long has it been this way?" and the father said, "Since he was a child, and oftentimes the evil spirit tries to destroy him, often throwing him into the fire or into the water. But if thou canst, I ask thee to have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to the father, "(I can) if thou wilt believe all things I shall say unto you, this is possible to him that believeth."

And immediately the father cried out, with tears streaming down his face, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." (Matthew 17:15-21; Mark 9:12-26.)

There is more to the story, but of importance to us, as we consider the faith that is capable of giving a reasonable service, is the agonizing plea of Jesus when He heard the child was not healed, and His answer to the question the disciples asked when the child was healed and the crowd was gone – "Why could not we cast him out?" they asked. Matthew says Jesus answered, "Because of your unbelief." Then Jesus recalled to their memory the parable of the mustard seed

which He had recently taught them, assuring the disciples that if they have faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible to them. Then He adds, "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

When He said, "O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you", Jesus knew His death was imminent. Remember, He had just come from the Mount of Transfiguration. Whether he was agonizing over the inability of His disciples to heal the child, or whether it was a general concern for the quality of the faith of all He would leave behind, it was most certainly a statement of concern for the failure of all He knew and loved to have the faith necessary to bring about the blessing the Lord was so anxious to give and the world so desperately needed.

Many have thought Jesus was talking about casting out a certain kind of evil spirit, but remember, at the moment He came upon the situation He bemoaned the lack of faith that allowed the problem to arise; and after it was over He told His disciples it was their lack of faith that kept them from healing the son. When He said, "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting", He was not talking about evil spirits. He was talking about the quality of their faith. The kind of faith required to bring about this kind of healing does not happen except by prayer and fasting.

If the life that is going to give a reasonable service requires a deep, abiding and active faith, how do we develop that quality of faith? Paul said, in his letter to the Romans, (Romans 10:16). "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." First we have to know who God is, what He promises and the way He has decreed that we receive those promises. That means we have to know the testimony of the scriptures, and we don't get that by osmosis! We don't even get that by listening to what others have to say about them. We get it by enlisting the power of the Holy Spirit as we study the word in private, in church school, in gatherings of all kinds with others who are likewise enlisting the power of the Holy Spirit in their search for the truth.

The writer of Deuteronomy (6:6-7) gives us a formula for developing such a faith in our families. He commands that the words of life shall be in the hearts of the parents and the parents shall teach them diligently to their children. "Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." You are to bind them for a sign upon your hands and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes, and you are to write them upon the posts of your house and upon your gates. What does it mean, once you have them in your heart, to bind them on your hands, make them as frontlets before your eyes, write them on your door posts and on your gates? Our Lord is commanding that we not only know the words of life but practice them. Our hands must be doing the will of the Lord. Our thoughts must always be remembering Him, His great love, power, mercy and justice and what he requires of us. Our homes must reflect His presence in our daily lives. Our gates must keep out those influences that would deter us from sharing and living the words of the Lord. It is the prayer of a righteous man or woman or

family, as James informs us, that availeth much. In fact, the scriptures tell us that more than once it has been the prayers of the righteous few that have saved an entire people from destruction.

There is that wonderful story in Genesis 18:25-40. The Lord has told Abraham that He is going to have to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness. Abraham says surely the Lord will not destroy the righteous with the wicked, so he asks the Lord, "Will You spare Sodom if I can find 50 righteous people in the city?" The Lord agrees, but Abraham begins to wonder whether there are really fifty righteous people there and says, "Lord, would you do it if I lack five of finding fifty? Would you do it for forty-five?" The Lord agrees. Again Abraham hesitates. "Perchance, if I can find only forty!" "Yes," the Lord says, "I will not destroy it for forty's sake." Abraham begins to be a little embarrassed at his questioning the Lord. He says, "Lord, please don't be angry with me, but would you do it for thirty?" Again the Lord assures him that he will save the city if he finds thirty righteous people residing there. Emboldened, he says, "Now that I have gone this far, what about twenty?" The Lord agrees again. "I will not destroy them for twenty's sake." Abraham knows he has gone about as far as he can go with the Lord and pleads that the Lord be not angry with him if he asks once more. "Perhaps 10?" And the Lord said, "I will not destroy the city for ten's sake!" And He left off speaking to Abraham! Of course, Abraham did not find 10 righteous people in Sodom or Gomorrah and the cities were destroyed; but not until Lot, his wife and two daughters were led, by the hand, out of the city by angels. Lot had other daughters and sons-in-law whom he asked to leave with them. Had Lot's own family been righteous, there could easily have been 10 righteous people in Sodom and the city would not have been destroyed?

Mormon 2:50 says the promises to the Lamanites will be fulfilled because of the prayers of the righteous for them.

Paul says those who live righteously are those who can "Come boldly before the Lord." (Ephesians. 4:12-16). (Proverbs 28:1) – "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion!"<sup>2</sup> All too often, the unrepentant man, woman or child is afraid to pray or too ashamed, not understanding the loving nature with which God would accept their prayers; but the one who comes boldly before the Lord will ask for blessings the Lord is anxious to provide. Just go to your concordances and see how many times Jesus said we would receive if we would ask the Father in Jesus' name. James tells us, (James 4:3-4) "Ye have not because you ask not."

Alma gives us a familiar formula for developing faith in Alma 16:143-173. He says if you just have a desire to believe, like the father who cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief!", you plant the seed of faith. When the people to whom Alma was speaking asked how they could plant the seed, he recalled to them the scriptures that testified of God's power and presence. You get acquainted with the testimony of the scriptures that God is powerful and that all that He promises is possible. Then you experiment upon the word. Try it out. Bind it upon your hands and begin to think of it and talk of it continually. Nourish

that seed, not just with study. Nourish it with action - experimenting on the promises of God - until your understanding begins to be enlightened and your mind expands and you are ready to try another promise of the Word. As my husband, Delbert, taught so faithfully, "Prove the promises. Prove the promises. That's the kingdom way!" (Some of you may remember his little song. I think his sons still use it.) It is all a part of nourishing that seed of faith by great diligence and patience, additional experimenting, with additional testimony of the scriptures and of those who, like you, have planted the seed.

As faith begins to grow, our prayers become more intense. Our understanding of God's purposes enlarges and we seek newer and better ways to be a part of His work in the world. You remember Enos and his prayer that lasted all day in the forest and resulted in his wonderful experience with his Lord. The thing that sent Enos to the forest to pray was that he remembered his father's words about eternal life, and the joy of the Saints sunk deep into his heart. To have the words of eternal life and the joys of the Saints sink deep into your heart, you must first know them. The writer of the Hebrew letter begins the 12th chapter saying, 'Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.'

The writer has just finished that amazing recitation of the miracles faith has wrought beginning with the creation. It is significant to note that each recitation is of something that someone has done by faith that serves the purposes of the Kingdom of God. It was by faith that Abel gave an acceptable offering, even though it caused him to lose his life. It was by faith that Enoch accomplished the establishment of Zion and was translated. It was by Faith that Abraham left his native home, was willing to sacrifice his own son, and became the father of a great nation when, the scripture says, he was as "good as dead!". It was by faith that Sarah was able to give birth to a son in her old age. Those faithful ones "received not the promises," the writer says, for they were looking for a country where God would not be ashamed to be called their God. They were looking for the Kingdom of God on the earth - that same kingdom for which we are looking and for which we are trying to give a reasonable service!--a country where God would not be ashamed to be our God.

That writer recounts the great miracles of the Hebrew history that were done by faith but does not forget the many of those faithful people who suffered mockings, scourging, stoning, imprisonment rather than deny their faith. Some were sawn asunder, some were slain by the sword, some chose to be made destitute of this world's goods and comforts rather than betray their God and His purposes. They were people, the writer of Hebrews says, of whom the world was not worthy! (Hebrews 11.)

Alma chapters 8 to 10 tells the story of Alma and Amulek's ministry in Ammonihah. The judges and other leaders of the nation, of whom Zeezrom was one of the chief, were denying the faith and persecuting the people of faith. Amulek spoke boldly of their lying connivances and told them if it had not been

for the righteous ones among them, they would already have been destroyed, not by flood as at the beginning but by famine and pestilence. Angry at his denunciation and giving false testimony as to what he and Alma were preaching, the authorities put Alma and Amulek in prison. Then they stoned the men who believed and ran them out of the city, and took their wives and children and burned them with fire, along with their sacred books. They brought Alma and Amulek bound, out of prison and made them watch the burning! After hearing the cries of the women and children, Amulek cried, "How can we watch this awful scene? Alma, we have the power to stop this. Let's stretch forth our hands and exercise the power that is in us to stop the flames!" But Alma replied, "The spirit constraineth me. I must not stretch forth my hand, for the Lord receiveth them up unto himself in glory, and he allows this to go on so the judgments that will come upon those who do it will be just."

You will remember that Amulek questioned, "Perhaps they will burn us, too?" But Alma said, "Be that according to the will of the Lord, but our work is not finished, therefore they burn us not."

You will remember the rest of the story, how Alma and Amulek were bound, stripped of their clothing, deprived of food and water and taunted for days by the Judges, the lawyers and other leaders of the land, until the day when they all came at once into the prison to taunt them. The prison shook violently and the falling walls killed all but Alma and Amulek.

There are Saints in some parts of the world who are right now facing the choice that Alma and Amulek and the believers in the city of Ammonihah faced! It hasn't come to us and may not ever, but for those in Nepal, in China, and in other parts of the world, the problem is very real, and some are among those who have already had to make the choice. Witness the man recently on trial in Afghanistan, threatened with execution if he did not renounce Jesus Christ in favor of Allah. Or the woman who was to speak at the meeting Brother George Thomas was attending whose family butchered her on the way to the airport because she had become a Christian. We have Brother Thomas' report of a Nepalese who was beheaded, with his family forced to look on. It may not be that we have to face the choice between life and death or torture, but we will have to decide whether to lie a little or cheat a little to take advantage of a business deal or to gain an advantage over another in competition for a job or a position of honor, or whether to pass on that bit of vicious gossip that is going around.

(2 Nephi 12:9-12). "Yea, and there shall be many which shall say, Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die: and it shall be well with us. And there shall also be many which shall say, Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God, he will justify in committing a little sin: yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this. And do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false, and vain, and foolish doctrines,"

The scriptures are full of testimonies of the way the Lord works with His chosen people. Knowing what they say gives us not only confidence to ask for His blessing but gives us understanding when His blessing comes. God always answers our prayers, but sometimes He says, "NO!" As we develop faith that promotes a reasonable service, our prayers begin to consider that the wisdom of God does not always coincide with our wisdom. We begin to understand that there are times when our physical lives may need to be sacrificed for the greater good. There are times when we have to accept what appears to be a raw deal in our profession or business, an unjust decision in the courts in order to remain true to the standard the Lord has set for us.

To review briefly - to develop faith that makes it possible for us to perform a reasonable service to our Lord requires that we know what God can do and will do for us and in us. We need to understand that God can do for us whatever He wants to do. He will do for us whatever He sees is best for us and for His purposes, if we allow it. That means, to develop a faith that can perform a reasonable service requires we have to learn to trust His judgment. Whether it is best to protect and heal us physically or whether it is best to strengthen us physically so we can remain faithful spiritually in spite of physical ills and discomforts is up to Him to decide when we ask that His will be done. When we accept that whether we live or die we live or die unto Him (D&C 42:12d), we are free to see the blessings that He gives us, even though we may be among those who do not "receive the promises" as the writer of Hebrews says.

When we remember that God spared not His own Son from persecution and death, it may be a comfort for us to know that we are in good company even when we suffer. When we remember that Peter was warned of that day when he would be bound and taken where he did not wish to go - even to his death, or that Paul asked three times that the thorn in his flesh be removed, (2 Corinthians 12:7--10) but the Lord said "No" to his pleading. "My grace is sufficient for you," He said, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It may be a comfort for us to know that we are in good company if the blessing we ask is not immediately available. Maybe that job we thought we wanted so desperately was not what it was represented to be. Maybe that man, or that woman, with whom we thought we were in love was not one with whom we could have made a happy, zionic home. Maybe when the Lord closed the door on that hope of ours, He was opening a better door for which we need to look earnestly and wait patiently.

God did not promise that our faith would always make our life easy. He even says we can expect a trial of our faith. In Ether 5:6 -18, Moroni explains that we should not dispute the power or intent of God because we see no response to our prayers, because we receive no witness until after the trial of our faith. He explains that it is after faith that the miracle comes. He reminds us that it was the faith of Alma and Amulek that caused the prison walls to tumble down. Consider the torture, the awful experience of standing by and watching the burning of the women and children and the faith it took to refrain from stopping the flames when they knew they had the power; consider all the suffering they had to endure and had to watch others endure before the miracle occurred. It was the faith of

Ammon and his brethren that brought the miracle of salvation to the Lamanites, Moroni explains.

Ammon and his brethren, the Sons of Mosiah, add to the pattern for further nourishing our faith. Alma says (Alma 12:4-5), they searched the scriptures diligently that they might know the word of the Lord. They acted on that word by going to the Lamanite enemies to share their faith. Then they gave themselves to mighty prayer and fasting. In our beginning story, Jesus said the kind of faith that is required to perform His ministry takes prayer and fasting.

So how do we develop the kind of faith that will take us through whatever the future will bring? After we believe in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, and fill our minds and lives with testimonies that God is able, and begin to live righteously as the disciples of Jesus had done, Jesus indicated further increase in the quality of our faith will have to be with prayer and fasting.

You have all had classes on prayer. You have all read what the scriptures have to say about prayer, praying always, praying diligently, praying in faith. You all know James' counsel (James 5:16): "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." You have all prayed, often with mighty prayer, as the Book of Mormon describes the prayers of Nephi (2 Nephi 3:39 - in Nephi's Psalm, 2 Nephi 3:29-66), the prayer of Enos (Enos - 1:5) as he prayed all day in the forest. You know the command Alma gives (Alma, 4:6) to meet off in fasting and mighty prayer for the welfare of the souls of those who know not God.

Notice how many times fasting is combined with prayer in the testimony of the scriptures concerning faith. Just how fasting intensifies and enhances the prayer is not always apparent, but it is the instruction of the One in whom our faith resides that it does make a difference. The word from which fasting is translated when Jesus said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" means, voluntary or religious lack of food, according to *Strong's Concordance*. When David spoke of fasting after his son died, the word used meant, to cover the mouth. When he spoke of humbling his soul with fasting in Psalm 35, the word meant, to cover his mouth. When Queen Esther said she and her maidens would fast three days, the word used meant, to cover the mouth. When Jesus gave instructions for the fast, the word used meant to abstain from food. I am not here to discuss whether there are other ways of fasting. I just want to address the fact that Jesus was asking that we abstain from food when He spoke of fasting.

Over a year ago we were asked by our Patriarchs to begin the practice of abstaining from food at least twice a week - before the Wednesday night and Sunday morning services. As David indicated, it is a way of humbling ourselves, acknowledging that we desire the bread of life over bread that we bake. When we abstain from food, we give up something that is essential to our physical life to receive something that is essential to our spiritual well being. Prayer, to be most effective, according to our Lord, must sometimes be accompanied by

fasting. A part of our reasonable service is learning to fast and teaching our children to fast. It is a well-known rule of life that the children usually want to do what their parents know how to do. It is a part of their growing up. If fasting is a frequent practice by the parents, the children just grow into the practice naturally. And it is wisdom that they learn to fast for more reasons than one. In uncertain times, it is wise that the children know that going without food for a few meals or a few days is not necessarily going to be harmful to them. The Lord has required it and He would not ask that which is harmful. So, while those who have not fasted may become panicky at the first missed meal, those who know how to fast will take the opportunity for more fervent prayer.

So, to review again, we first plant the seed of faith by searching the scriptures to learn who God is and what He desires for His children. Then we experiment on the word - on the promises that God gives, trying to fulfill the conditions that He says will make the promise come true. As we experiment, we nourish the seed by sharing those testimonies that result from the experiment and by finding and trying more promises in the Word of God. There is no way we can find and try the promises without prayer, and to make that prayer more effective, we add fasting at appropriate times and in appropriate circumstances.

As we grow in faith, we learn that God does not always provide us with the easy way to meet all circumstances. Sometimes the demands of His Kingdom have to supersede our own physical welfare, so we learn to trust Him. That leaves us free from worry and debilitating concerns when things do not go as we would wish, for we have the assurance that He knows our need, He hears our prayer, He will do that which is best in the long run for us and for His Kingdom. That, after all, is what we pray for every time we pray the prayer He taught us to pray – “Thy Kingdom Come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!”

You know my husband, a faithful Seventy of the Lord's own choosing, sits in a rest home unable to walk, or to carry on a conversation. His body is strong but a series of TIA's have robbed him of his memory to such an extent that he can't remember how to walk or to brush his teeth or to go to the bathroom. He does remember music, and love. He has received administration repeatedly, always with the will of the Lord being the blessing asked. I don't understand why he has to just sit there; but I have never questioned the Lord's right to do with him what He chooses. We promised to go where the Lord wanted us to go, to do what the Lord wanted us to do, to be what the Lord wanted us to be long ago, even before we accepted appointment in the Lord's church. I have not lost a night's sleep over the situation because I trust the Lord completely. I know He could send Delbert home today whole, if He chose. And I have no idea what good he is doing where he is, but since the Lord could change the situation if He chose, I am content to wait upon Him for that decision. I know that one day Delbert will be released from this body that no longer responds to his commands either by death or by healing, and I eagerly await the day of his deliverance.

Now we have not only the testimonies of the scriptures which closed hundreds, even thousands of years ago, but of the countless testimonies that have followed

and are now among us. We hear them when we gather in prayer service, at Sunday worship, in everyday conversation with the Saints, but our children don't hear them if they are not there to listen. We read them in good books, the publications of the church and in other publications dedicated to sharing the good news of the gospel, but our children don't read them if we have only the TV guide and the Harry Potter books in our home. The testimonies sink deep into our hearts and the hearts of our children only if our minds are filled with pictures of the wonderful acts of God, not with pictures of rape and murder, immoral living, debauchery, self indulgence and greed that are portrayed so vividly on our TV, our computer and our movie screens and as the normal way to live. It is our sharing with our children those same testimonies that fills their minds with longing for a closer walk with their God. There is no way those testimonies can "sink deep into their hearts" if they have never heard them.

So how does our growing faith provide a reasonable service? With that kind of faith we are no longer afraid to give our bodies a living sacrifice. One of the most repeated instructions of the scriptures is, "Fear not!" And yet we are in those days which the scriptures describe as a time when men's hearts are failing them for fear. Luke 21:25-27 reports Jesus as saying, "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, like the sea and the waves roaring. The earth also shall be troubled, and the waters of the great deep;" (Does that sound familiar?) "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth..." "And when these things begin to come to pass," you know what His instruction to us is – "lift up your heads and look up, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh."

Jesus said he told his disciples what was going to happen at his crucifixion before it happened so when it came to pass they would believe He was the Christ. (John 14:29). He has filled the scriptures of the Restoration with descriptions of those things to come upon the earth before His return. And He says to us, "I told you before it happened so when it happens, you will know that I am in charge and you do not need to be afraid. If you live, you will live unto me. If you die, you will die unto me. It is the same!" When Jesus comes from the heavens with a shout, and they who are alive are caught up in the clouds to meet Him, (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18) it doesn't matter whether we are among those coming with him or among those caught up to meet Him. The thing that matters is that we are qualified, by our faith, to be with Him on the earth a thousand years helping to establish His Kingdom firmly upon the earth, that country for which Enoch and Abraham and all those faithful ones of old were looking where God is not ashamed to be called our God!

Jesus Christ assures us we can trust Him in every circumstance if we remain faithful, living righteously and asking with prayer and fasting. It may help to memorize a few of the reassuring scriptures to recall in times of decision making, stress or danger.

D&C 1:8: "... And though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall

not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled...the record is true, and the truth abideth for ever and ever.”

2 Nephi 9:133, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord, JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; ...”

You probably already have a treasure store of scriptures and songs for just such a time as this.

What do you need? To renew your strength? In Exodus 19:4 God says He bore the Israelites up on Eagles wings when he took them out of Egypt. That passage forms the inspiration for that beautiful song Michael Crawford sings “He will raise you up on eagles’ wings; Bare you on the breath of dawn; Make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of His hand!” Isaiah 40:31 says “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

I am not as strong and steady on my feet as I once was. During our recent congregational weekend fast, we decided to end our fast with a soup dinner at the church on Sunday. I had a large soup bone that needed using, so I offered to bring a large pot of bean soup. As I finished the soup and started to move it from the stove to the garage for cooling, I realized that, for me, it was very heavy and very hot. I thought of the next morning when I would have to reheat it and move it to the church. I also knew that I was to drive to Independence immediately after the dinner to be present at Nathan’s recital, and I would be returning that night. That meant at least four hours travel and a late night without my usual Sunday afternoon nap. I offered a prayer that I would be given strength to do it all safely.

I had not eaten anything from Friday noon - not even tasted the soup - until lunch on Sunday. I expected to eat dinner with my family in Independence that evening, but nobody ate dinner at their house that night. When the family was all assembled, there was barely time to get to the recital. Sunday night at about 11:00, as I knelt beside my bed I could only marvel! I had managed the soup without incident. I had performed my usual duties at the church. I had eaten only one meal since Friday lunch and felt no hunger. I had driven the four hours to Independence and back with not one moment of feeling tired or sleepy! My prayer was one of praise and thanksgiving to a loving God who had given so abundantly the strength for which I had asked.

Is it food you are in need of? The miracle of feeding the 5000, or the 4,000, are not just stories. They tell a truth that becomes evident by faith. Many of you have heard before, or read in *The Restoration Voice*, the story of the Thanksgiving miracle at Independence Second Church during the great depression, as told by Patriarch John R. Grice. You will need to read it, but briefly, those who prepared extra food for the dinner found themselves with just as much flour and sugar and other ingredients at the close of their baking day as at its beginning. When the church was filled with people, many of whom were hungry and without food to contribute, and the tables were too sparsely loaded to feed them all, the Pastor’s prayer was followed by an abundance of food so great that many baskets were

sent home with those who came with nothing.

Do you need words to say under questioning - courage to share your testimony? (Luke 21: 12-14). The disciples asked Jesus about the future in which He said they would be betrayed and persecuted and hated. He answered, "Settle it in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer. I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to gainsay (deny, speak or act against, dispute) nor resist, and it shall turn to you for a testimony." (D&C 97:1d), ... When the Lord sent out His people to testify of Him in this last day, he promised, "Speak the thoughts I shall put in your hearts, .... and It will be given in the very moment what you are to say!"

Brother Oakman often told the story of his and Brother Smolney's arrest by the Gestapo during World War 2. Frightened, Brother Smolney asked, "What are we going to say?" Arthur said. "We are going to tell the truth. Liars have to have good memories." When the interrogation began, the dreaded police asked what they were preaching about the government. Bro. Oakman responded that they were preaching that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of God. That pleased the police, for to them Der Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler, was God; and to them that meant the ministers were teaching that the Germans were going to be successful in conquering the world. The ministers were released.

But those of us who have been to Kenya and elsewhere trying to share the gospel as we know it, received similar blessings in our work. Diane Anderson is a nurse and when she prepared to go with me to Kenya, she prepared to give instruction on health practices. But when she got there, she was told that her part at the women's retreat was to teach about the relationship of a man and a woman in marriage. Kenya is a polygamous society, and a woman's retreat is like a reunion here. Everybody comes, husband, wife and all the children. With no time to prepare, Diane was able to teach so well that at the last meeting when she asked "What have you learned this week?", a man held up his hand and, demonstrating as she had done, explained, one man, one wife. They are equal and they work together!"

You don't get hours to prepare what you are going to share there. One afternoon we were told we were to form a panel, each make a presentation and let the people ask us questions about the sanctity of the home. When? Right now! We took our places in front of the entire retreat audience. Since I was the oldest, the others all pointed at me and said, "You first." So I went first, and the moment I stood on my feet and my interpreter took his place, I knew exactly what the Lord wanted me to say. I was even directed to a young man who was there and told by the Lord to see to it that he got a copy of the work booklet that was being distributed and scriptures to go with it.

Faith to give a reasonable service comes by knowing and living God's way. It is a gift of God to those who even have a desire to believe, who will plant the seed of faith, experiment upon His words, nourish the word through study, prayer and fasting and allow the belief to grow until we can come humbly but boldly before God (Ephesians. 4:12-16) to ask for whatever is needed to face that which is

occurring in our lives.

To know for what to ask, we have to know God's words. There is no way of getting around it. We have to know our scriptures. God has filled them with promises of things He wants us to have. If we prove those promises, we will be constantly learning, constantly repenting, constantly petitioning our Lord for instruction, with fasting and prayer, experimenting on His word and growing in faith until we can face whatever is required of us without fear.

God doesn't promise it will be easy, but He continuously says, "Fear Not!" Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 all tell of Jesus' prophecy of the last days. And He says, "When you hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified, for these things must come to pass; but this is not the end." (Luke 21:9) He told His disciples, "Before these things they will take you before kings," etc. (Luke 21:15 - 17) – "You shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and friends and kinsfolk, and some of you will be put to death" – "hated by all the world for my name's sake." In the same breath, verse 17, He promises, "Not a hair of your head will perish!"

Jesus said to His disciples, "I tell you before it happens so when it happens you will believe I am the Christ." (John 13:19). God wants you to know what He said is going to happen so when it happens you will know that He knows and is the One in charge.

To give a reasonable service in these tumultuous days, we have to cultivate the idea that life or death does not matter and place our trust fully in God. Remember Alma and Amulek. Amulek says, "Maybe they will burn us, too." Alma responds, "Be that as God wills." Leave it in God's hands and don't waste time and energy worrying when things do not go as we hoped they would. Remember Jesus in Gethsemane. He didn't get everything He would have liked, except that His overriding wish was that the will of His Father be done. That kind of faith is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in our lives. That kind of faith becomes the shield that quenches all of the fiery darts of the wicked one. (Ephesians 6:16). In 1 Thessalonians, 5:1 -24 Paul calls it "a breastplate of faith and love" that, with our hope of salvation keeps us from being one of those to whom the Lord's coming is as a thief in the night. We become children of light, children of the day who do not sleep as others but are awake preparing for the Lord's coming. It is the call of the Restoration (D. & C 103:2) "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night; therefore, gird up your loins that you may be children of the light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief."

1. Desire to believe.

2. Plant the seed of faith. Hear the word of the Lord. Study. Know the testimony of the scriptures and of those about you who know their Lord.

3. Nurture the seed. Talk about those testimonies with your children continuously, and with others with whom you associate. Treasure the word of the Lord in your heart.

4. Live the principles you talk so that your righteous living will make it possible for your testimony to be heard and make you able to come boldly before your God in mighty prayer.

5. Enhance your prayer with fasting as the Lord instructs.

6. Find the promises of the Lord and experiment upon those promises until your faith in that thing becomes knowledge. Then, choose another promise on which to experiment - prove another promise. Watch your faith grow!

7. And we become a people who trust the Lord so completely that we are willing to give our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Him, which is our reasonable service.

And who knows, this little band of Saints might even be the means of saving a nation from destruction.

Following are scriptures to study and ponder:

### **Developing Faith, a Reasonable Service**

Necessity of faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6).

Belief is not enough. Devils also believe and tremble. (James 2:19).

Power of Faith - With faith all things are possible. (Matthew 17:15-21; Mark 9:12-26).

How does one get faith? Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:16)

Developing faith in a family - hearing and doing. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Righteous living saves others. (Genesis 18:25-40. Mormon 2:50).

Righteous living allows bold prayers. (Ephesians 4:12-16; Proverbs 28:1).

Alma's formula for developing faith - planting and nourishing the seed. (Alma 16:143-173).

Testimony of the scriptures. (Book of Enos; Hebrews 11-12).  
Alma chapters 8 through 10.

A possible test of our faith. (2 Nephi 12:9-12).

A matter of trust - Whether we live or die, we live or die unto Him. (D&C 42:12d).

Expect a trial of your faith. Miracles come after faith. (Ether 5:6-13).

Mighty prayer. (James 5:16 ); (2 Nephi 3:39 - in Nephi's Psalm); (Enos - 1:5).

Diligence in prayer with fasting: Jesus, (Matthew 17:15-21; Mark 9:12- 26.); For those who know not God (Alma 4:6): Example of the Sons of Mosiah (Alma 12:5).

Meaning of the word, fasting, in these scriptures (*Strong's Concordance*).  
Voluntarily abstain from food. Cover the mouth.

Result of growing faith:

Freedom from fear. (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 - Luke 21:9 and 25-27);  
(John 14:29); (D&C 1:8).

Strength for the task. 2 Nephi 9:133); (Exodus 19:4); (Isaiah 40:31).

Food: For four thousand - Matthew 15:29-36; Mark 8:1-8).

Food For five thousand - Matthew 14:13-18; Mark 6:36-46; Luke 9:12-17;  
John 6:5-13.

Modern Day Saints - John Grice, *Restoration Voice*, #164.

Courage - face questioning - share your testimony (Luke 21: 12-14) ; (D&C  
97:1d); (John 13:19)

Shield to quench Satan's fiery darts – (Ephesians 6:16).

Breastplate to foil Satan's plans and prepare us for the coming of Jesus Christ  
in these last days, (1 Thessalonians, 5:1-24) and (*Doctrine and Covenants*  
103:2).