



“How Good and How Pleasant It Is . . . to Dwell Together in Unity”

“A long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together.”

From the Life of Joseph Smith

On December 27, 1832, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a commandment from the Lord that the Saints were to begin building a temple in Kirtland (see D&C 88:119). On June 1, 1833, the Lord gave further instructions to the Prophet: “Now here is wisdom, and the mind of the Lord—let the house be built, not after the manner of the world . . . ; let it be built after the manner which I shall show unto three of you” (D&C 95:13–14).

A few days later, the Lord fulfilled His promise, giving Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency a remarkable vision in which they saw detailed plans for the temple. Frederick G. Williams, the Second Counselor in the First Presidency, later recalled: “Joseph [Smith] received the word of the Lord for him to take his two counselors, [Frederick G.] Williams and [Sidney] Rigdon, and come before the Lord, and He would show them the plan or model of the house to be built. We went upon our knees, called on the Lord, and the building appeared within viewing distance, I being the first to discover it. Then all of us viewed it together. After we had taken a good look at the exterior, the building seemed to come right over us.”¹

When Joseph Smith explained to a council of high priests the glorious plan that had been revealed to the First Presidency, the brethren were delighted and went out at once to choose a site—a spot in a wheat field the Smith brothers had planted the previous fall. Immediately Hyrum Smith ran to get a scythe to begin clearing the land for construction, exclaiming, “We are preparing



After Joseph Smith explained the plan of the Kirtland Temple, as revealed by the Lord, Hyrum Smith ran to get a scythe, exclaiming, "We are preparing to build a house for the Lord, and I am determined to be the first at the work."

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This sense of enthusiasm became a unifying emotion as the Saints worked and sacrificed to build the first temple in this dispensation. Under Emma Smith’s direction, women made stockings, pantaloons, and jackets for the temple workmen. The women also made the curtains and carpets for the temple, with the work on the temple interior being directed by Brigham Young. Brother John Tanner sold his 2,200-acre farm in New York, arriving in Kirtland just in time to lend the Prophet the \$2,000 to redeem the mortgage on the temple block, which was about to be foreclosed. To protect the temple from threatening mobs, men guarded the temple at night, sleeping in the same clothes they had worn as construction workers by day.

The Prophet declared: “Great preparations were making to commence a house of the Lord; and notwithstanding the Church was poor, yet our unity, harmony and charity abounded to strengthen us to do the commandments of God.”³

Heber C. Kimball, who became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve a year before the temple was dedicated, described the great effort: “The whole church united in this undertaking, and every man lent a helping hand. Those who had no teams went to work in the stone quarry and prepared the stones for drawing to the house.”⁴ Elder Kimball also recalled: “Joseph said, ‘Come, brethren, let us go into the stone-quarry and work for the Lord.’ And the Prophet went himself in his tow frock and tow breeches [linen work clothes] and worked at quarrying stone like the rest of us. Then every Saturday we brought out every team to draw stone to the Temple, and so we continued until that house was finished; and our wives were all the time knitting, spinning and sewing, and . . . doing all kinds of work.”⁵

The efforts of the Kirtland Saints were typical of the unity, sacrifice, and devotion that would make it possible for the Lord’s purposes to be fulfilled in the years to come. This was one of many times when the Saints would pull together, heeding the admonition of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “A long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together.”⁶

Teachings of Joseph Smith

When we work together in unity, we can better accomplish the purposes of God.

“[We] feel rejoiced to meet the Saints at another General Conference [October 1840]. . . . The Saints are as zealous, untiring, and energetic as ever, in the great work of the last days; and [this] gives us joy and consolation, and greatly encourages us, while contending with the difficulties which necessarily lie in our way.

“Let the brethren ever manifest such a spirit, and hold up our hands, and we must, we will go forward; the work of the Lord shall roll forth, the Temple of the Lord be reared, the Elders of Israel be encouraged, Zion be built up, and become the praise, the joy, and the glory of the whole earth; and the song of praise, glory, honor, and majesty to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever, shall reverberate from hill to hill, from mountain to mountain, from island to island, and from continent to continent, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and His Christ [see Revelation 11:15].

“We are glad indeed to know that there is such a spirit of union existing throughout the churches, at home and abroad, on this continent, as well as on the islands of the sea; for by this principle, and by a concentration of action, shall we be able to carry into effect the purposes of our God.”⁷

“[The Nauvoo Temple] is progressing with great rapidity; strenuous exertions are being made on every hand to facilitate its erection, and materials of all kinds are in a great state of forwardness, and by next fall we expect to see the building enclosed. . . . There have been frequently, during the winter, as many as one hundred hands quarrying rock, while at the same time multitudes of others have been engaged in hauling, and in other kinds of labor. . . .

“While the busy multitudes have thus been engaged in their several vocations performing their daily labor, and working one-tenth of their time, others have not been less forward in bringing in their tithings and consecrations for the same great object. Never since the foundation of this Church was laid, have we seen

manifested a greater willingness to comply with the [requirements] of Jehovah, a more ardent desire to do the will of God, more strenuous exertions used, or greater sacrifices made than there have been since the Lord said, 'Let the Temple be built by the tithing of my people.' [See D&C 97:10–11.] It seemed as though the spirit of enterprise, philanthropy and obedience rested simultaneously upon old and young; and brethren and sisters, boys and girls, and even strangers, who were not in the Church, united with an unprecedented liberality in the accomplishment of this great work; nor could the widow, in many instances, be prevented, out of her scanty pittance, from throwing in her two mites.

"We feel at this time to tender to all, old and young, both in the Church and out of it, our unfeigned thanks for their unprecedented liberality, kindness, diligence, and obedience, which they have so opportunely manifested on the present occasion. Not that we are personally or individually benefitted in a pecuniary point of view, but when the brethren, as in this instance, show a unity of purpose and design, and all put their shoulder to the wheel, our care, labor, toil and anxiety are materially diminished, our yoke is made easy and our burden is light [see Matthew 11:30]."⁸

"Now, let me say once for all, like the Psalmist of old, 'How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' 'As the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments, as the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion,' is such unity; 'for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore!' Unity is power. [See Psalm 133:1–3]."⁹

We grow in unity as we strive to be obedient to God's laws and overcome our selfish feelings and prejudices.

In December 1840 the Prophet wrote to members of the Quorum of the Twelve and other priesthood leaders who were serving missions in Great Britain: "It is . . . very satisfactory to my mind, that there has been such a good understanding between you, and that the Saints have so cheerfully hearkened to counsel, and [striven] with each other in this labor of love, and

in the promotion of truth and righteousness. This is as it should be in the Church of Jesus Christ; unity is strength. ‘How pleasing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’ [Psalm 133:1.] Let the Saints of the Most High ever cultivate this principle, and the most glorious blessings must result, not only to them individually, but to the whole Church—the order of the kingdom will be maintained, its officers respected, and its requirements readily and cheerfully obeyed. . . .

“Let the Saints remember that great things depend on their individual exertion, and that they are called to be co-workers with us and the Holy Spirit in accomplishing the great work of the last days; and in consideration of the extent, the blessings and glories of the same, let every selfish feeling be not only buried, but annihilated; and let love to God and man predominate, and reign triumphant in every mind, that their hearts may become like unto Enoch’s of old, and comprehend all things, present, past and future, and come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ [see 1 Corinthians 1:7].

“The work in which we are unitedly engaged is one of no ordinary kind. The enemies we have to contend against are subtle and well skilled in maneuvering; it behooves us to be on the alert to concentrate our energies, and that the best feelings should exist in our midst; and then, by the help of the Almighty, we shall go on from victory to victory, and from conquest to conquest; our evil passions will be subdued, our prejudices depart; we shall find no room in our bosoms for hatred; vice will hide its deformed head, and we shall stand approved in the sight of heaven, and be acknowledged the sons of God.

“Let us realize that we are not to live to ourselves, but to God; by so doing the greatest blessings will rest upon us both in time and in eternity.”¹⁰

“We would say to the Saints that come here [to Nauvoo], we have laid the foundation for the gathering of God’s people to this place, and [we] expect that when the Saints do come, they will be under the counsel that God has appointed. . . . We are trying here to gird up our loins, and purge from our midst the workers of iniquity; and we hope that when our brethren arrive



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from abroad, they will assist us to roll forth this good work, and to accomplish this great design, that ‘Zion may be built up in righteousness; and all nations flock to her standard;’ that as God’s people, under His direction, and obedient to His law, we may grow up in righteousness and truth; that when His purposes shall be accomplished, we may receive an inheritance among those that are sanctified.”¹¹

“We, all of us, have our friends, our connections, our families and associations; and we find that the ties of friendship . . . and brotherhood have indissolubly united us together with a thousand endearing associations; we have embraced the one common faith, even that ‘which was once delivered to the saints.’ [Jude 1:3.] We have been privileged with hearing the everlasting gospel, which has been delivered unto us by the spirit of prophecy, by the opening of the heavens, by the gift of the Holy

Ghost, by the ministering of angels, and by the power of God. . . . A kindred sympathy runs through the whole body, even the body of Christ, which, according to Paul's statement, is his church; and no one part of the body can be injured without the other parts feeling the pain, for says Paul, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoice all the rest are honored with it [see 1 Corinthians 12:12–27].”¹²

The greatest temporal and spiritual blessings always flow from a unity of effort.

In January 1841 the Prophet Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency gave direction to Saints who were coming to Nauvoo from different parts of the world: “By a concentration of action, and a unity of effort, we can only accomplish the great work of the last days . . . , while our interests, both temporal and spiritual, will be greatly enhanced, and the blessings of heaven must flow unto us in an uninterrupted stream; of this, we think there can be no question.

“The greatest temporal and spiritual blessings which always flow from faithfulness and concerted effort, never attended individual exertion or enterprise. The history of all past ages abundantly attests this fact. . . .

“We would wish the Saints to understand that, when they come here, they must not expect perfection, or that all will be harmony, peace, and love; if they indulge these ideas, they will undoubtedly be deceived, for here there are persons, not only from different states, but from different nations, who, although they feel a great attachment to the cause of truth, have their prejudices of education, and, consequently, it requires some time before these things can be overcome. Again, there are many that creep in unawares, and endeavor to sow discord, strife, and animosity in our midst, and by so doing, bring evil upon the Saints. . . . Therefore, let those who come up to this place be determined to keep the commandments of God, and not be discouraged by those things we have enumerated, and then they will be prospered—the intelligence of heaven will be communicated to them, and

they will, eventually, see eye to eye, and rejoice in the full fruition of that glory which is reserved for the righteous.

“In order to erect the Temple of the Lord, great exertions will be required on the part of the Saints, so that they may build a house which shall be accepted by the Almighty, and in which His power and glory shall be manifested. Therefore let those who can freely make a sacrifice of their time, their talents, and their property, for the prosperity of the kingdom, and for the love they have to the cause of truth, . . . unite with us in the great work of the last days, and share in the tribulation, that they may ultimately share in the glory and triumph.”¹³

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

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

- Think about the Prophet Joseph Smith’s statement, “A long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together” (page 273). What happens when an effort is not long enough or strong enough? What happens when people pull in different directions? How might we apply the Prophet’s statement in our homes? in our Church callings?
- Read the first full paragraph on page 275. Why do our burdens become lighter when we work together? (For some examples, see pages 271–75.) What principles have helped you to work in greater unity with others?
- Review the first full paragraph on page 276. What are some dangers of selfishness? What can we do to annihilate selfish feelings within ourselves? How do you feel when you “let love to God and man predominate” in your heart?
- Review the paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 277. In what ways have you benefited from “ties of friendship” and “endearing associations” in your ward or branch? How do wards and branches benefit when “a kindred sympathy runs through the whole body”?

- Study the paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 278. Why do you think it is unwise to expect perfection in members of our wards and branches? When have you seen an imperfect group of people use their diverse talents and abilities for a common cause? What have been the results of this unified effort?

Related Scriptures: Matthew 18:19–20; John 17:6–26; Mosiah 18:21; 3 Nephi 11:29–30; D&C 38:24–27; Moses 7:18

Notes

1. Frederick G. Williams, quoted by Truman O. Angell, in Truman Osborn Angell, *Autobiography* 1884, pp. 14–15, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
2. Hyrum Smith, quoted in Lucy Mack Smith, “The History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet,” 1844–45 manuscript, book 14, pp. 1–2, Church Archives.
3. *History of the Church*, 1:349; from “History of the Church” (manuscript), book A-1, pp. 296–97, Church Archives.
4. Heber C. Kimball, “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 15, 1845, pp. 867–68.
5. Heber C. Kimball, *Deseret News*, May 27, 1863, p. 377; punctuation and capitalization modernized.
6. Quoted by Brigham Young, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, Apr. 20, 1867, p. 2; punctuation modernized.
7. *History of the Church*, 4:212–13; punctuation modernized; paragraph divisions altered; from a report from Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency, Oct. 4, 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, p. 187.
8. *History of the Church*, 4:608–9; punctuation and grammar modernized; from “The Temple,” an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, May 2, 1842, pp. 775–76; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.
9. *History of the Church*, 6:70; from a letter from Joseph Smith to the Saints, Nov. 1, 1843, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Nov. 1, 1843, pp. 376–77; this letter is incorrectly dated Nov. 8, 1843, in *History of the Church*.
10. *History of the Church*, 4:227, 230–31; spelling modernized; from a letter from Joseph Smith to the Twelve, Dec. 15, 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Jan. 1, 1841, pp. 258, 260–61; this letter is incorrectly dated Oct. 19, 1840, in *History of the Church*.
11. *History of the Church*, 5:65–66; from “The Government of God,” an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, July 15, 1842, p. 858; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.
12. “To the Saints of God,” an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 15, 1842, p. 951; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.
13. *History of the Church*, 4:272–73; from a letter from Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency to the Saints, Jan. 15, 1841, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Jan. 15, 1841, pp. 276–77.