

The Nature of Needs

DEREK A. CUTHBERT

Anciently, the Apostle Paul gave firm assurance that “my God shall supply all your need[s]” (Philippians 4:19).

Likewise, in latter-day revelation, the Lord himself has declared: “Every man who has need may be amply supplied” (D&C 42:33). As we study man in his many roles and challenges in life, we find that there is not a single one of God’s children who does not have many needs. What are your basic needs? All of these can be fulfilled by a loving and beneficent Heavenly Father. Indeed, he wants to fulfill our needs. I would like to share with you today some thoughts on the nature of needs. In so doing it is my earnest desire and prayer that we all become more aware not only of our own needs, but especially of the needs of others.

As we contemplate this important topic, we find that there are three basic kinds of needs. A need can be a “necessary duty or obligation.” It may also be a “lack of something requisite, desirable, or useful.” Sometimes it can be a “condition requiring supply or relief,” which in the extreme case means the “lack of the means of subsistence.”

Let us consider, then, the nature of needs. This will help us to identify them, and then to fulfill them.

By Duty or Obligation

First, there is our need to do certain things, whether by duty or obligation. Of paramount importance here is the need to pray. Even the most primitive of peoples on the earth acknowledge a Supreme Being, a Creator, and try to portray him sometimes in wood and stone. How wonderful that he has identified himself to us, through his beloved son, Jesus Christ. He has revealed himself as our Father in Heaven, who wants us, his children, to keep in touch with him while we are away from home, our heavenly home. Jesus taught us not only the need to pray but how to pray—showing reverence and gratitude, making petition and commitment, praying daily, and in his name. However, the adversary places many obstacles in our paths—such as the spirit of rebellion, feelings of selfishness, and a false sense of spiritual self-sufficiency. These could keep us from humbling ourselves on bended knee. Promptings such as “I won’t pray!”

Derek A. Cuthbert was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 18 February 1986.

“Why should I pray?” “I have no need to pray” can all be overcome. What great blessings come from prayer, which not only brings rich rewards, but is its own reward. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Luke 11:9).

I think of the faithful Saints in far-off West Africa who prayed and petitioned five, ten, fifteen years, for the fulness of the restored gospel to be taken to their land. Answers to prayer are not in man’s time, but in God’s time. Patience, faith, and humble submission are finally rewarded. How wonderful to see the revelatory results of these prayers, blended with the powerful petitions of a prophet of the Lord, Spencer W. Kimball, as the gospel rolls forward among God’s children in Africa.

There are many other duty-needs, of course, as important as prayer. For example, the need to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is surely a duty and an obligation, for we owe him a great debt of gratitude. He provided the ransom for each of us. We hear much in these perilous times of hijacking and kidnapping. Millions of people watch the screens and the headlines to see whether the victims will be released through payment of ransom money or some other way.

In order for us to be freed from the bondage of sin and from the shackles of transgression, we need faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He gave himself, he laid down his life as a ransom. We show our gratitude by our faith, and we show our faith by our thoughts, words, and especially our deeds. Any thinking person would like to make a fresh start, begin a clean sheet, correct past mistakes, and go forward, untrammelled by the past. It all becomes possible by first having faith in Jesus Christ as our personal savior and redeemer, and second, by making the necessary changes to conform with his teachings through the process of repentance. We all have a need to repent and make changes, every day, every month, every

year. After repentance a person is ready to be baptized. Baptism is also a fundamental and universal need, for it is the gateway into the Lord’s church, the church of Jesus Christ. My thoughts again turn to Africa, which I have been privileged to visit a number of times. Never have I seen so many different Christian churches, all professing Christ but not being in conformity and unity with his teachings—whether of doctrines, ordinances, or ecclesiastical organization. There is always a mass of confusion when men’s ideas predominate and the Savior takes second place. There is a need for the cleansing ordinance and unifying bond of baptism.

I am happy to declare that the light has dawned. I received the assignment to dedicate four small meetinghouses in Cross River State, Nigeria, at Ikot Ebo, Ikot Ekong, Ikot Anang, and Ikot Esen Oku. I had seen them under construction—simple, functional, but beautiful—gleaming white against the brilliant greens of the tropical rain forest. The local Saints had helped when they could, and the sisters deserve special mention for carrying water on their heads for two or three miles to the building sites.

In each new chapel as we took our places on the stand, we paused to shake hands with the local chiefs who had been invited to attend and to occupy the front seats. They were dignified in their robes, each carrying a chiefs cane. The head chief at each chapel graciously accepted the invitation to address the congregation. Of course they used different words, but they expressed the same powerful sentiments. “You are the light of this community. You have brought us the true gospel. We know you love and care for us, for you serve without pay. Thank you for coming.” Did not the Savior exhort us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Oh, that we might all be a light to our respective communities.

In West Africa the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ, travels fast, for it is shared with members of the extended families who frequently live in close proximity. The people are spiritually ready for baptism; they love the Lord, they help their neighbors, and they sing and pray with all their hearts and voices in praise and gratitude.

I have been impressed especially with the bright-eyed children as they sing "I Am a Child of God." They are already alert and teachable, but following baptism, when they have received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, their understanding and desire to serve the Lord is quickened. I think of how eager the children were in a little African school in Zimbabwe as we were privileged to go into three classes and give them a spiritual message, testimony, and blessing. These were the same children who had recently seen the Church film *Man's Search for Happiness* and had written: "This was a wonderful film. This Church should make more films and everyone should see them." Another had said, "Everyone should search for happiness. Happiness comes through overcoming temptation and sin." It is truly a marvelous work and a wonder that such truth-seeking young people in many parts of the world are now hearing and accepting the gospel and are joining the Lord's church through baptism and the laying on of hands.

There is a great need for every person in the world to have the guidance of the Holy Ghost in their lives. The Holy Ghost helps us in our work and in our studies, protects and warns us, and brings things to our remembrance. This great gift is bestowed upon us following baptism into the Lord's church. It is indeed a duty to seek to have this gift, for we can bring blessings to others and live purposeful lives ourselves when we have the Holy Ghost. Thus it was in the pristine church of Jesus Christ, and so it is in his restored church today.

"Things Ye Have Need Of"

Now that we have considered the first kind of need—namely, duties and obligations—I would like to discuss with you the second kind. These are the needs that represent "a lack of something." Sometimes we do not recognize these, but it is good to have the assurance that our "Father knoweth what things [w]e have need of" (Matthew 6:8).

A Need for Knowledge

I will select a few of the many needs, beginning with knowledge, especially knowledge of the Almighty God, and of his beloved son, Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote to the Hebrews: "Ye have need that one teach you" (Hebrews 5:12). The Old Testament prophet Hosea declared, "People are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Yes, we all need knowledge, and we all need a teacher. The missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are such teachers, who will not only impart facts and share knowledge, but who will also help us to develop wisdom.

How grateful I am that missionaries from the western United States traveled across the world to teach me and my family in England thirty-five years ago. It was not long after our baptism that a fine local brother who was serving as counselor to the mission president said to me, "Find yourself a teacher." When I inquired of him the significance of this counsel, he expanded it by saying, "Find yourself a teacher who can lift you and inspire and motivate you. But remember, he must be standing on higher ground."

As the years have rolled by in an unending sequence of experience and service, I have had many such teachers, both in business and church activities. I will mention five only, who will represent those not named. In September 1958 I was introduced to a man with whom I served closely for two years. This was T. Bowring Woodbury, the new president of the British Mission. As he was set apart by President David O. McKay

for this important calling, the prophet referred to the opening of a “new era” in Britain with the dedication of the London Temple that very month. “By” Woodbury, as he was affectionately known to his many friends, was a man of vision and valor—these two qualities being essential elements of faith. He imparted of his knowledge and experience to me, and helped me to feel the urgency of the work, and to develop leadership skills. I had many spiritual experiences with him during these two years of close association as we helped to make the promised “new era” become a reality. I became a wiser person.

At about the same time I began to work closely with a bright young chemical engineer, Dick Morris, in the large company where I was employed as a cost-control accountant. He expanded my vision in another way, regarding the industrial scene, the interrelationship of industrial processes, and of personnel. I gained knowledge, but also wisdom—not only in creating statistical reports, but in interpreting them as a basis for decision making. We came up through the organization together, and he eventually was appointed managing director and then chairman of the board. My role expanded too, into management accounting and business management. He was a great teacher.

In the early 1960s, I was very privileged to have President N. Eldon Tanner as a teacher when he served as West European mission president, based in England. The lessons he taught me spanned both church and business, for I learned from him as a newly called stake president, as he shared his similar experiences and suggested ways to improve and develop. I learned from his business acumen and integrity when he served as chairman of the board of Deseret Enterprises Limited, the first Church commercial enterprise in Europe. As director and general manager, I was with him often, and am so grateful that he helped me fulfill this need to be taught and lifted.

Then, during the 1970s and 1980s, I was privileged, along with so many others, to be taught by a prophet of the Lord, Spencer W. Kimball. During my service as a Regional Representative from 1970 to 1975, mission president from 1975 to 1978, and since then as a General Authority, my soul has been lifted as I have been taught from on high through him. This has not only been in meetings and conferences, but in many personal settings. One such time was when I was visiting from England for general conference and I inquired of President Kimball’s secretary if could see him. I knocked on the door and his familiar voice said “Come in.” I started to open the door, but before it was fully open, he was already at the door. I felt a sense of urgency, and real caring. He took me by the arm, showed me round his office, then sat me down across the desk. “How is the work going in England?” he inquired. I gave a brief report, but he knew already; he was teaching me the principle of stewardship and accountability. Then he reached up to his bookshelves, took down a book, and handed it to me. “Have you read this book?” he asked. As I looked at the title I indicated that I had read some of the book but not all. He smiled, took up a pen, opened the book and wrote a message, and then gave it to me again. I shall always treasure that copy of *The Life Story of Heber C. Kimball*, the first missionary to England.

There are many more great teachers—exemplars of whom I could tell—but I just have one more, my dear wife. How much I have learned from her—in charity, in patience, in endurance, in joyfulness. She has lifted me now for over forty years, and has shown me wisdom as we have counseled together, prayed together, laughed together, and cried together. I am grateful for those pearls of wisdom.

A classic example of one who lacked wisdom was the boy Joseph Smith, who wanted to join a church but was confused as to which one to join. Fortunately, he was a student of the Bible, and found the necessary guidance in the

Epistle of James. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). By his humble and sincere application of the need for prayer and seeking for God to fill his lack of wisdom, the heavens were opened to him, and a pillar of light descended upon him. In the light he saw two glorious personages, and one, referring to the other, said, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him” (JS—H 1: 17). Joseph was told to join none of the churches, but providing he remained faithful and true he would be the means of restoring to the earth the fulness of the gospel and the church of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we do not realize what knowledge or wisdom we need, but God knows and we should “ask the Father . . . for what things soever [w]e shall stand in need” (Mormon 9:27). You will remember the young man who came face-to-face with Jesus and asked him what he needed to do to have eternal life. Jesus told him to “keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17), and then he interviewed him as to whether he was keeping them. Apparently he was. The young man then asked a question we all need to ask, “What lack I yet?” In other words, “What other needs do you, our Father in Heaven, see that I have?” The Savior’s reply was not one that the young man wanted to hear. Nevertheless, it was important for him to have asked the question. He was told to sell all that he had and follow Jesus. This he felt was too much to ask, for he was a rich young man and had great possessions. Thus, he went away sorrowful. How sad that his meeting with the Son of God should end in this way. What of us? Some of us tend to say, “I keep the commandments, I attend my church meetings, I pay my tithes and offerings, and I live the Word of Wisdom.” Then the Lord gives us a real test. Leave the things of the world and give yourself in service. Will we do it? Will you do it when the call comes?

Why should we respond to such a demand, such a sacrifice? Why did the Savior respond to the great demands upon him as he endured

persecution, ridicule, and betrayal? Why did he, the Son of God, respond by sacrificing his very life? He did it because he loved us, and loves us, unconditionally. Why should we respond? “As I have loved you . . . love one another,” he has challenged (John 13:34). The degree to which we follow him and keep his commandments indicates the depth of our gratitude to him and the sincerity of our love for him. Each of us has different needs, but the gospel fulfills them all. I can truly testify to you today that since becoming a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have had all my needs fulfilled—spiritually, physically, mentally, and socially.

A Need for Others

Some of the other needs we may have are the need for friends and family, the need to love and be loved, the need for peace of mind and happiness and purpose in life. Then there is the need for good health, and the need to have spiritual guidance to help us make decisions. The secret of fulfilling almost all of these needs is the realization that we all need each other, and we all need God. The same message that the Lord gave through the Apostle Paul he has given anew through the Prophet Joseph Smith. “The body hath need of every member” (D&C 84:110). President Harold B. Lee expanded this by saying, “The Church hath need of every member . . . and every member has a deep need to participate fully in the Church” (Regional Representatives’ seminar, October 1971).

Before I became involved in full-time Church service, I was engaged in the industrial world, and particularly in petrochemical operations. As we set out to manufacture certain products, we would produce many by-products along the way. So it is with life. As we set out to help others in their needs—such help and service being the main product of a Christian life—lo and behold, we find that our needs have been met by the by-products of service.

Everyone of us has heard the adage “The only way to have a friend is to be a friend” (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: First Series. Friendship*), but sometimes we feel deprived of friendship, not realizing the solution lies in our own hands. We need to reach out and indeed be outgoing, rather than inward looking, bound up in our own little world. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a social gospel; Jesus was constantly among the people. His first miracle was performed at a wedding feast; the people were always thronging around him and he spoke to multitudes. He was accused of being a “friend of publicans and sinners” (Matthew 11:19) because he reached out to all. How wonderful that each of us can be counted one of his friends, for he declared, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14).

As I travel to the stakes and missions of the Church, sometimes to far corners of the earth, I am always making new friends. What a marvelous feeling it is, having arrived in a distant country, to be overwhelmed by the sentiment expressed by the Apostle Paul, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). We make instant friends through the common bond of the gospel, but that does not mean all of our friends must be Latter-day Saints. Our children have consistently made friends outside of the Church, as well as within the Church. In England, where we lived most of our lives, they were in a minority of one sometimes, in class, school, or even community. Even now that we live in Salt Lake City, an LDS community, they have nonmember friends. Over the years, however, when we had just moved into a new town or a new country, we saw how difficult it was until friendships were established. What a great opportunity you have in this great institution of learning to make friendships that will not only span the years ahead, but will span the oceans and continents. How

great is the need to make the most of ourselves, go to places, meet people, socialize, and make friends. How important it is to develop the qualities we desire in others.

A Paramount Need

The need for peace of mind is a universal need, for without it there can be no lasting happiness. The gospel of Jesus Christ brings peace and harmony when fully absorbed into our lives. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord has again admonished us to have our “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (D&C 27:16). What a great thing it is to be a peacemaker; what a terrible thing to be a troublemaker. Peace of mind is a great blessing to which we are all entitled. “Where there is peace and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor doubt,” said St. Francis of Assisi (*The Counsels of the Holy Father St. Francis. Admonition 27*).

I remember the day my father died; my mind was somewhat in anxiety and turmoil. I returned home, sat in my favorite chair, and picked up the scriptures to meditate and find peace. I read a little, then closed my eyes, and in my mind’s eye I saw my father as a young man, and he was dressed in white. Although he had never become a member of the Church, I knew I would see him in the resurrection, and furthermore, I had seen him as he would appear. My mind was at peace again. When we rely on the Lord, we can have fulfillment of his promise, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). He is “The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

The need for happiness is a paramount need—lasting happiness, not fleeting happiness. True happiness comes from knowing one’s purpose in life and in fulfilling it. Without purpose there is no direction; there is, instead, doubt and darkness, wandering and wavering. A story is told of a man who was digging a ditch. Someone asked him, “Why

are you digging the ditch?" "I am digging the ditch," he replied, "to earn the money to buy the bread to get the strength to go to work to dig the ditch!" Without purpose, one goes in circles, instead of making progress, day by day, year by year, toward that goal established by the Almighty God for us, his children: "immortality and eternal life" (Moses 1:39).

When I served as a mission president in Scotland, two of our fine missionary sisters taught and baptized a man in his eighties. In a testimony meeting soon afterward, he stood and gave thanks that he now had purpose in life. "I was waiting to die when the sisters knocked on my door," he said tearfully. Before long he was called as counselor in the ward Sunday School presidency, and later as Sunday School president. He had great joy and happiness in his church service and made many new friends. A year or so passed and he came over to Salt Lake City for a visit, made more friends and gained more experiences, and especially, was able to go to the temple for the first time. When he did step from this life a few months after his return to Scotland, what a full and purposeful life he had—and all within two years!

This Blessing of Guidance

Finally, on this second kind of need, I would mention the need to have spiritual guidance to help us make decisions. Is there any one in this whole wide world who has no decisions or choices to make? No, not one. It is a major part of life to use that special gift of God—free agency. Personally, I have decisions and choices to make every day. Some are easy to make; others take time. For these major ones I sometimes use a clean sheet of paper, dividing it down the middle. I then head the two sections "for" and "against," and prayerfully list all the reasons I can think of under each heading. Having apparently exhausted my ideas, I then ponder, reading and re-reading. The decision I need to make formulates in my

mind and I decide what to do. Then comes the most important step. I kneel in prayer to gain confirmation that my decision is in harmony with my omniscient Father in Heaven. He knows what is right and good for me, and through the Holy Ghost tells me whether I have made a wise choice.

Behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong. [D&C 9:8–9]

What a need we all have for the blessing of such spiritual guidance.

"Open Thy Hand Wide"

This leads us then to the third category of need, the kind of need which causes us to look outward and prompts Christ-like feelings of compassion and the desire to help others. I speak of the need that is often qualified by the adjective "dire" or "urgent." It is a condition requiring relief and, in many cases, constitutes a lack of the very means of subsistence. I do not see any here in this situation, but out there, over half the world's population—over half the children of God—live in countries where per capita income is less than \$300 a year!

How wonderful that your fasting and prayers and donations both last Thanksgiving and then last January have brought much relief. The scriptures are replete with references to this great need and how it should be fulfilled. "Open thine hand wide . . . to thy needy," the Lord proclaimed through Moses (Deuteronomy 15:11). "Ye do love money, . . . more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted," he chided through the Nephite prophet Moroni (Mormon 8:37).

I have at home a tape-recorded message from the Saints in Ghana, West Africa, that is very special to me. Branch President Ato Dodson says, “The Mormon Church is one big family and came to our aid in these critical times. When my members came around for me to distribute the goods, a lot of them shed tears. They couldn’t believe it. Neither could I myself. I discovered that, in the Lord’s true Church, all things are possible. The words of Malachi came true that if we are faithful to the Lord, paying our tithes, blessings would be showered upon us. We are very, very grateful and don’t have enough words to express our gratitude. We shall never forget such a gesture by our brothers and sisters in the United States. One day we will be self-sufficient through the programs you have given us.”

His Relief Society president, Elizabeth Kwaw, added her feelings: “I just don’t know how to express my gratitude for the food aid we have just received. On behalf of all the sisters, I say ‘thank you.’ For some time we have been very short of food in Ghana and even in our Relief Society homemaking meetings we hadn’t the food to prepare. Last week, at our homemaking meeting, we were able to prepare rice pudding with all the ingredients from the food we received from the United States.”

Finally, the elders quorum president, Stephen Kwaw, gave his thanks: “I would like to express my personal appreciation and that of my quorum members for the love that has been demonstrated to us by the food aid. It has been abundantly clear to us, for we have seen the pictures of the love and care that went into the packaging of this food aid to us. The lesson we have learned is to continue to be faithful to the teachings of this Church and endeavor to also have enough in store for future generations to come in other parts of Ghana and Africa.”

I like the account given by Luke in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles:

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: . . .

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold.

And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need [Acts 4:32, 34, 35]

You, the rising generation, have the great responsibility upon your shoulders to reach out to those in need as never before. Although there are millions of God’s children in the depths of poverty, lacking even the means of subsistence, the Lord has declared,

For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; . . .

Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment. [D&C 104:17–18]

The excellent education you are receiving in these critical years of your life is to help you to determine and discern and discover needs, your own needs and those of others. You are also learning how to fulfill those needs, whether they be physical, spiritual, mental, or social needs. Learn well, and live accordingly, and you will enjoy a fullness of life and fulfill the measure of your creation. Above all, have a grateful heart, which will always prompt and motivate you to reach out to others, for “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren,” Jesus said, “ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

In these latter-days, the last days before the Second Coming of the Lord, the fulness of his gospel has been restored, with all the laws and ordinances, as prophesied anciently. The very church of Jesus Christ has been re-established on the earth, and the power of God is among

us. This is the living church of the living Christ,
and he speaks through a living prophet, even
President Ezra Taft Benson—a champion of truth

and justice, righteousness and love. I say this in
the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.