“Some Have Compassion, Making a Difference”
Robert D. Hales

The following is a portion of a speech by Robert D. Hales in the April 1987 General Conference.

The people of each dispensation of time have received the teaching and admonition of living prophets to care for one another.

This spirit of being anxiously engaged in caring about those who are not partaking of the blessings of the gospel is not confined to those who are called as shepherds but should permeate the lives of all of God’s children.

True shepherds nourish and care for each member of the flock and keep them in remembrance. They do not simply number them. Shepherds know and care for their flock. A shepherd cannot rest when even one of the flock is lost.

Some years ago, as a young man, I had an opportunity to work summers on a ranch with my wise Uncle Frank, who taught me an important lesson about shepherding. He described to me how lambs are enticed and led away from the safety of their mothers’ sides and the flock that loves and cares for them.

Cunning coyotes send their pups to play near the flock—running, rollicking, tumbling—it looks so inviting to the little lambs. The frolicking pups look like they are having so much fun that the lambs are enticed to wander from the protective environment of the flock and their mothers’ nurturing sides. In their innocence, they fail to observe that the adult coyotes are moving in a circle ready to pounce and cut them off from the flock, ultimately killing and devouring them.

This is also Satan’s way. He uses our free agency to entice us with apparent “good times.” Soon we may become entrapped and, if not eventually brought back to the flock, we will not be able to go to the temple, enter into the covenants, and receive the ordinances necessary to attain eternal life, that we might live in the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Some of us have strayed at one time or another. Some have repented and come back; but some, for one reason or another, are still looking for the right moment, the right person, or the right set of circumstances to come back.
As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, our responsibilities are clear; we are to:

- Reach out in love and be anxious to forgive those who have wronged us.
- Help by fellowshipping and caring for those who want to come back, receiving them with open arms and willing hands.

We must do as Jude, the brother of James, admonished:

“Have compassion, making a difference” (Jude 1:22; italics added).

There are principles that will help us to “have compassion, making a difference.” These principles are encompassed in Luke, chapter 15, where Jesus used three parables to give us examples of the importance He placed on finding those who are lost and rendering “compassion, making a difference.”

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, how can we develop a caring environment in our homes and meetinghouses that will give comfort to those who want to come back, knowing they will be welcomed and loved upon their return?

A good example of compassion and service making a difference is the example of Don and Marian Summers, which represents the experiences of many other missionary couples. While serving in England, they were asked to serve the last six months of their mission in the Swindon Branch to teach and assist in activating members. For eighty years Swindon had been a branch with a faithful few and with many good members becoming less active.

Don and Marian recently wrote me, recalling the following:

“Our first visit to Swindon Branch was a bit disheartening as we met with the Saints in a cold, rented hall. The congregation numbered seventeen, including President and Sister Hales and four missionaries. Still wearing our winter coats, we all huddled around a small, inadequate heater while we listened to a Sunday School lesson.”

The letter continued:
“A branch member approached me one day: ‘Elder Summers, can I give you a bit of advice? Never mention the word *tithing* to the Swindon members; they really don’t believe in it, and all you will do is upset them.’”

Brother Summers said, “We did teach tithing and all the other gospel principles. With example and the encouragement of a branch president, there was a change of heart, and faith and activity started to increase. The membership records were completely updated as we visited every member’s home. When the leaders started caring, the members began to respond, and a whole new spirit pervaded the branch. The members became excited again about the gospel and helping one another.

“Firesides were held in our homes and we worked closely with stake and other proselyting missionaries. We made a promise to the Lord that we would not let one new or reactivated member fall into inactivity while we were in Swindon.

“One young couple had a difficult adjustment to make as their customs, manners, and dress were different. They became offended at suggestions for changes. The couple twice wrote to the bishop [since by then it was a ward] and asked to have their names removed from the Church records. In the last letter they forbade any of the members to visit them, so Marian and I went to the florist and purchased a beautiful plant of chrysanthemums and had it delivered to the young couple. It was a simple note: ‘We love you; we miss you; we need you. Please come back.’ Signed, Swindon Ward.

“The next Sunday was fast and testimony meeting and our last Sunday in Swindon. There were 103 members in attendance compared to seventeen six months before. The young couple was there and, in bearing his testimony, the husband thanked the Swindon Ward for not giving up on them.”

Each of us can have similar experiences in our local wards and branches by working with and loving those who are less active. What a joy it is to give “compassion, making a difference” to those who may be ready to find themselves and then want to come back.