



Eating An Elephant One Bite at a Time: Provident Living Made Simple

As Latter-day Saint women we have a great desire to “do it all.” Sometimes this can seem totally overwhelming and beyond what we can do. We want so badly to follow what the Prophets have asked of us and be perfect in all things. We get discouraged and it seems the task is just too large, complex and out of our reach. There is an old expression, “How do we eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” What does this mean? It means that when we feel overwhelmed and that what we are asked to do seems too much, too big for us to accomplish – don’t stress, don’t think “I can’t do this, I can’t eat an entire elephant! This is just too large!” Instead, don’t panic. Simplify the task and say, “I can start with just a little bite – that I can handle, right?” Then take another bite and another and before we know it, we have made great progress and the task does not seem so huge and overwhelming.

One of the areas that we have been asked to put into practice in our homes is the area of Family Preparedness or Provident Living. It may seem like “eating an elephant” at first glance, but as we simplify and put Provident Living in our own lives, families, and homes we will be able to magnify our families and help prepare us to serve the Lord and hear His call to each of us.

Elder Robert D. Hales has defined for us what Provident Living is. “Provident living means not coveting the things of this world. It means using the resources of the earth wisely and not being wasteful, even in times of plenty. Provident living means avoiding excessive debt and being content with what we have.”

Elder L. Tom Perry in his talk “If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear” in the November, 1995 issue of the Ensign stated:

"The need for preparation is abundantly clear.... Just as it is important to prepare ourselves spiritually, we must also prepare ourselves for our temporal needs. Each of us needs to take the time to ask ourselves, What preparation should I make to care for my needs and the needs of my family? We have been instructed for years to follow at least four requirements in preparing for that which is to come."

He tells us that the four areas include the following:

"First, gain an adequate education. Second, live strictly within your income and save something for a rainy day. Third, avoid excessive debt, and Fourth, acquire and store a reserve of food and supplies that will sustain life."

President Kimball said: "The Lord will not translate one's good hopes and desires and intentions into works. Each of us must do that for himself." (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, p.8). We have a great desire to do as counseled, but these areas look like giant elephants that we have to eat. Here are a few ideas for three of the areas on how we can take one bite at a time and get started on eating those elephants!

Acquire and Store a Reserve of Food and Supplies that will Sustain Life.

- Build your food storage one step at a time. President Hinckley has said: "We can begin ever so modestly. We can begin with a one week's food supply and gradually build it to a month, and then to three months. ...I fear that so many feel that a long-term food supply is so far beyond their reach that they make no effort at all. ("To Men of the Priesthood," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 58).
- Learn the basics of Food Storage. An excellent resource is in the pamphlet "All is Safely Gathered in: Family Home Storage Pamphlet."
- Consider what you would normally eat and store those items.
- Start gradually by doubling items you are buying. One can of corn for immediate use, one to be stored.
- Stock up on items that are on sale.
- Bulk buying is a money-saver, but make sure you check expirations dates so they will not spoil before you use them.
- Store any storable food that comes from an unexpected source. For example, if friends or family invite you to dinner or bring in a meal to you, store the canned or packaged food items you would have used for that meal. (Colleen Hansen, "Frugal Food Storage," *Ensign*, Jan. 1993, 73-74.)

- When storing items you do not usually eat, supplement your meals with those items. You can become ill by eating foods you are not used to eating. You want to give your body time to adjust to unfamiliar storage items.
- Bottle, freeze or dry fresh foods in season.
- Save the durable soda or juice bottles and clean and sanitize them and use them for water storage. (lds.org to Provident Living to Family Home Storage to Drinking Water)
- Learn how to properly package and store longer-term food storage items, such as wheat, white rice, and beans.
- Prepare a 72-hour kit. A checklist can be found by going to: lds.about.com
- A First-Aid kit is a must! Great ideas are given in the March *Ensign*, 1992, Random Sampler, Beyond Band-Aids, 73.
- Set aside some money (no matter how little) each week to add to your food storage.
- Do not go into debt to establish your food storage all at once. Gradually add to it as your budget allows.

Live Strictly Within our Income and Save for a Rainy Day

- Pay tithing first above all else.
- Make sure you have a budget and stick to it. Go over it often to make sure it is meeting your needs, not wants. After looking over your budget and spending habits, consider limiting the money you use on nonessential items and add it to your savings instead.
- Add some of your income to your savings each month. Set this money aside immediately after paying your tithes and offerings.
- Start simple and each week as you shop, eliminate one item on your shopping list and add the cost of that item to your savings.
- Instead of going to the movie, watch one at home and put that money in savings.

- When you take a family vacation, plan simple and put the money saved in your savings. Every penny does count and it will add up bit by bit and your savings will start to grow.
- Look over things that you may not be using and have a garage sale and put all of that money in savings.
- Include your children in your savings plan. Encourage them to earn money, pay tithing first and start their own savings. As children save for missions and education they will value it more and work harder to succeed.

Avoid Excessive Debt

- Pray over necessary debt and go into debt after careful, thoughtful prayer and obtaining the best possible advice.
- If we do not have the discipline to control the use of credit cards, it is better not to have them. Debit cards can be used with a credit limit.
- Unencumber our lives, by paying off the debts we do have. Pay extra on one debt and when that is paid off, add that payment to the next debt until it is also paid off. If you have other debts keep paying off and adding the previous payment to another payment until you are completely out of debt!

Resources:

“Basic Principles of Welfare and Self-Reliance”, (lds.org to Gospel Library to World Wide Leadership Training)

“All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage Pamphlet” (Free at Distribution Center)

72 hour kit check list – lds.about.com

lds.org - Provident Living

provident-living-today.com

providentliving.com

“**Beyond Band-Aids**,” Random Sampler, *Ensign*, March 1992, 73.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, “**Lay Up In Store**,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 51-53

Elder Marvin J. Ashton, “**One for the Money**,” *Ensign*, Sep 2007, 36-39

Elder L. Tom Perry, “**If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear**,” *Ensign*, Nov 1995, 35