

when the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles governed the Church before a new First Presidency was organized. John TAYLOR, president of the quorum when Brigham Young died in 1877, did not have the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles formally reorganize the First Presidency until 1880. A similar interim existed after his death in 1887. Wilford Woodruff as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles directed the affairs of the Church on the basis of that position until 1889. Several years later, he instructed Lorenzo SNOW, then President of the Twelve Apostles, that it was the will of the Lord that the First Presidency should be organized without delay upon the death of the president (Lorenzo Snow Notes, Dec 3, 1892, Church Archives). Lorenzo Snow, therefore, was named President of the Church in a new First Presidency eleven days after President Woodruff's death, a precedent of reorganizing the presidency without delay that has since been followed.

Since a fundamental doctrine of the Church is the reality of continuing REVELATION, and since the Twelve Apostles are sustained as PROPHETS, SEERS, AND REVELATORS, there is no apparent reason that the Quorum of the Twelve could not depart from this precedent and select someone other than the senior apostle to lead the Church, if so directed by revelation. Established principles, however, require (1) that a revelation directing any other course of action must come through the senior apostle in the presiding quorum and approved by unanimous vote of the members of the quorum and (2) that the senior apostle in the presiding quorum by virtue of that position immediately presides over the Church following the death of the president.

The fundamental organizing principle of the Church rests on the reality that it was established by direct commandment from God to Joseph Smith and that those who lead it are specifically called of God to those positions. The existing succession process does not violate that principle, which it would do if succession were decided by a contested election either within the Quorum of the Twelve or by the body of the Church. In keeping with the principle of common consent, the name of each new president is submitted to the body of the Church for its sustaining approval. But this procedure is in no wise an election nor does it affect the legitimacy of the president's divine commission. Rather than empowering the new leader, the vote is an expression by members that they recognize

the legitimacy of the calling and that it is binding upon them. To sustain the president is a commitment that no assistance that can aid his success will be withheld and that no barriers that might hinder his efforts will be erected.

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## SUFFERING IN THE WORLD

Suffering is inherent in mortality. Physical bodies are subject to pain and discomfort from hunger, disease, trauma, violence, and exposure. As a social being, man is vulnerable to emotional suffering that often rivals physical pain—*anxiety, rejection, loneliness, despair*. Among the sensitive there are also other levels of profound suffering. They may relate, for example, to the awareness of the effects of sin or the anguish of the abuse or indifference of one's loved ones. And there is vicarious suffering in response to the pain around one and the sense of the withdrawal of the Spirit. For Latter-day Saints, Jesus' words on the cross "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is a measure of the depth of his suffering (Matt. 27:46).

Mankind's attempts to explain the necessity of suffering are varied: (1) it is an essential element in testing and building moral character; (2) it is the unavoidable side effect of agency; (3) it is illusory or utterly mysterious. Whatever partial consolations these attempts provide, suffering remains.

LDS doctrine provides two explanations that are uncommon in the Judeo-Christian tradition. First, all mankind chose to enter mortality with full knowledge of the great price that would be required of the Christ and of discipleship in his name. Second, one's suffering is to be in the image of that of the Lord, whose suffering was requisite "that his bowels [might] be filled with mercy . . . that he [might] know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12). In no other way could the redemption

of the universe and the unleashing of authentic love and compassion be achieved. Jesus described his own mission almost entirely in terms of healing: “to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; . . . to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isa. 61:1–3; Luke 4:18–19).

Only in the life to come amid the glories of the NEW JERUSALEM will the full effect of Christ’s mission “wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Rev. 21:4). Even so, for Latter-day Saints the embrace of his messiahship and the proclamation of his gospel were intended to relieve needless pain and suffering. They do so in many ways. First, they provide a foundation for hope that through the ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST one may find reunion with God. Second, they offer continuous access to the HOLY GHOST, the Comforter, and, through this, to an inner peace that “passeth all understanding” (Philip. 4:7). Third, they teach the law of the harvest, that many blessings follow naturally from obedience to the laws that govern them and that much unhappiness can be avoided, including sin and its accompanying pain, shame, and spiritual bruising. And finally, they establish a community built on kinship, a society of mutually supportive and protective fellow believers whose charge is to “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

Latter-day Saints do not believe that pain is intrinsically good. In their teaching there is little of asceticism, mortification, or negative spirituality. But when suffering is unavoidable in the fulfillment of life’s missions, one’s challenge is to draw upon all the resources of one’s soul and endure faithfully and well. If benefit comes from pain, it is not because there is anything inherently cleansing in pain itself. Suffering can wound and embitter and darken a soul as surely as it can purify and refine and illumine. Everything depends on how one responds. At a time of terrible desolation and imprisonment, the Prophet Joseph SMITH was told, “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall

exalt thee on high. . . . Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? Therefore, hold on thy way, . . . fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 121:7–8; 122:7–9).

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## SUICIDE

From an LDS perspective, suicide is a moral issue and is to be handled with particular sensitivity and human caring. The *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989) says, “A person who takes his own life may not be responsible for his acts. Only God can judge such a matter. A person who has considered suicide seriously or has attempted suicide should be counseled by his bishop and may be encouraged to seek professional help” (11-5). Such contacts need to be personalized and enduring. The inclination to commit suicide represents a crisis in a person’s life and should not be taken lightly. Underlying causes should be identified and treated.

The body of a person who has committed suicide is not dishonored. If the person has been endowed and otherwise is in good standing with the Church, the body may be buried in temple clothes. Normal funeral procedures are followed (*see* BURIAL).

Suicide and attempted suicide are painful and dramatic aspects of human behavior, but this does not mean that they should not be dealt with in terms of the same basic principles as those applicable in understanding and managing any other aspect of human behavior. Thus, principles associated with concepts of agency, accountability, atonement, eternal life, immortality, resurrection, and family establish the frame of reference Latter-day Saints use to guide their responses to such behaviors as they occur.