

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

DOING IS LIVING

by the Rev. David R. Simons

Did you ever ask yourself why the Lord in His Word, especially in His sermon on the mount, stresses the importance of deeds—of doing—as most important in preparing ourselves to receive the life of heaven? “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

Why is what we do so important in life?

Why is doing—doing the will of the Lord—absolutely vital to our spiritual welfare?

The answer, given in the Heavenly Doctrines is that what we do expresses and fixes our character. Acts of the body are acts of the mind and spirit. What we do, especially what we do with our hands, contains our whole character. For this reason angels can know the whole quality of a man from his hands.

Since our inner life expresses itself in the hands, there are few things in life more satisfying than doing what’s worthwhile with our hands: writing a good letter, making something from wood, molding clay, fixing an engine, playing a musical instrument.

A sense of accomplishment from doing what is useful and worthwhile—what brings others delight—brings a sense of fulfillment and inner delight which is the Lord with us telling us why we were created, rewarding us by touching our hearts with the delights of His Kingdom. He created us to do, to be useful for others.

Doing is the last thing in a series that starts in willing, progresses through thought and becomes something in deeds. We want to play a musical instrument or develop an athletic skill. We learn how we should proceed, then we try to carry what we know into act by practices and something wonderful happens: something which sounds musical to us, some hint of the skill, takes place and we feel a delight, the delight of music, the delight of the skill—a sense of accomplishment which sends us back for more learning, more practice, and greater success. It is this cycle of success that leads us to become truly skilled and useful people.

But there’s more to doing than this. There are other hidden benefits the Lord has stored up for those who do His will.

The delight we experience in playing a musical instrument or developing a skill has a carry-over value. It leads us to enjoy and appreciate the skills of others in a way not possible to those who have not tried and done. Doing ourselves places us in a position to admire and thrill to the deeds of others—the skill with which they play, the gifts they display from the Lord.

Although our enjoyment of life is expanded first by developing a skill, and second by being able to appreciate the skills of others, there's still more to come—the greatest delight of all is to use our skill in harmony with others—to play with an orchestra, to cooperate with a team. While doing something well by ourselves is satisfying and worthwhile, doing things in harmony with others multiplies what is accomplished, and brings even greater joy.

Doing things together—teamwork, genuine harmony—requires self-discipline, called in the Word “holy fear,” if it is to be truly successful. It is a fear lest anything of self—of “my lack of skill” or “my lack of attention”—spoil the effect; make the orchestra sound off-key, or cause the team to lose the game. It is the fear that my lack of practice, conditioning, skill, knowledge, or concentrated effort should in some way detract from the success of the group. When the good of the orchestra, the good of the team is central in the minds of all the players, when the team's welfare is placed before self, then there will be a cooperation, harmony, and unity that will lead to the greatest accomplishment and to the delights which follow.

Doing things with others, learning to enjoy team-spirit and group cooperation is the finest kind of preparation for life; for patriotism, working with others for our country's good; for New Churchmanship, working with others for the development of our Church and for angelic life in heaven. We are taught that in the harmony of many working together, delight and happiness are communicated to each one. Therefore the greater the number who are doing the Lord's will, the greater is the happiness. This is what the happiness of heaven is all about (359).

Texts: Matthew 7:21; Spiritual Experiences 359