

How the Gospel Influenced My Life

ROSE MARIE REID

Believe me, when I stand here now, this is really the very greatest honor that I have ever had, although every time I stand in front of an American audience I feel like saying to them, “Thank you for liking my things and thank you for making my business a success in such a very short time. I really owe *you* a tremendous thank-you.”

When the people of my very own church want me to talk to them, I feel very honored and very humbled.

When Brother Harvey L. Taylor wrote to me and said, “We would like to have you talk at BYU because we understand that you are not only a successful businesswoman but a member of the Church in good standing,” I thought, “That is the very finest thing that could ever have been said to me.”

Of course in business there have been many times when I have wondered, “Am I really doing the right thing? Is this really right?” So to know that the Church feels that I am “in good standing” is a very great reassurance to me.

There have been numerous times when I have been asked to talk to university people—from the marketing, advertising, designing, or home economic divisions—and as I have stood before them I have thought, “You would like to have me tell you how to become a success. You are thinking, ‘How did you become a success? If you answer that, it may help us to become a success in the field that we have chosen.’”

And I have looked at them and thought, “How can I tell you? I don’t think there are very many Mormons in your crowd, and I really don’t know how to tell anyone but a Mormon how to become a success because I don’t know how it works for other people.”

I only know that we are told that if we seek first the kingdom of heaven, all the rest will be added (see Matthew 6:33). That is such a simple formula. But how could non-Mormons understand it?

Sometimes in other cities in which I have attended Mutual, I have been asked, “Will you talk at the fireside tonight?” or “Will you talk to the M Man–Gleaner class?”

Then I have thought, “Now this is more like it, because to these people I can tell the things that really have made a success.”

And truly this business often makes me feel as though I have just been an onlooker, that I have just stood apart and watched the most miraculous things happen.

Of course I have tried to work to help to bring them about. Many of the things I have worked hardest to accomplish have never developed, but something completely different has developed that I had never even hoped for as the result of the work. And it is so much

Rose Marie Reid was a swimsuit designer and the owner of Rose Marie Reid Inc. when this devotional address was given on 1 June 1953.

better than my original plan that I think, "I really have nothing to do with this business."

As I told my mother in the early years of the business, "You know, Mother, it keeps me on my knees half of the time saying, 'Our Father in Heaven, please help me to know what to do about this,' and then the other half of the time saying, 'Thank you for doing so much for me.'"

In the very early years of the business—and even now, to a great extent—I spent very little time sleeping. Fortunately, if I sleep for ten minutes, I have been able to work for three hours, then sleep for another ten minutes and work for another three hours—and so on through the twenty-four hours of the day as though I have had a full night's sleep. I think this is a great blessing to me.

Working the Night Away

This morning, driving down from Salt Lake City, I asked Brother Taylor, "How much religion shall I put into this talk? Because if I really tell the truth about this business, it will be all religion."

I had not intended to become a designer, although my mother was a designer and had taught me to design. While she was teaching me, I used to say, "But, Mother, you are wasting your time! I am never going to design. I am only going to get married, have children, keep house, and look after my babies, and that is all!"

I had worked in my father's store, and I had learned that there was not one single thing about business that I wanted. Yet after I had moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where I would swim a great deal (there are twenty-seven miles of beaches there), I would see how women hated to wear swimsuits. They would get out of the water and put on a beach coat as quickly as possible so that no one could see how they looked in their swimsuit.

That was fourteen years ago, and I used to think, "That is not fair. A woman ought to be in a mood to have a wonderful time when she is wearing a swimsuit."

Then I would wonder, "What would make her really like to wear a swimsuit?"

I thought, "When does a woman feel herself to be most beautiful?"

And the answer is that it is when she is wearing an evening dress. So if I can give her that kind of feeling, if I can make a swimsuit that will give her the self-confidence she has in an evening dress, then she will love wearing swimsuits.

So I made a design, and it was shown to a buyer for Hudson Bay Store. She liked it, and she ordered six dozen!

Then I thought, "What do I do now? Where do I get enough material to make six dozen swimsuits? And who will sew six dozen for me?"

But I found a place where I could get fabric wholesale. Then I took my pattern around to various manufacturers, and every one of them looked at these "ridiculous patterns," "this ridiculous swimsuit," and said, "No, I am sorry. We are too busy making our own things."

Then I thought, "Oh dear, here the idea is going to be dead before it is even born. I cannot find anyone to sew my suits for me."

But what I thought was a calamity turned out to be a blessing! For as my business grew, I saw the other manufacturers stay just the same size or even go out of business. Then I thought, "What if I had been tied up with them in some way that I could not have broken loose!"

Somehow the Lord managed it so that at first I could have girls make the swimsuits in their own homes. Then, after the first season, we bought factory machines and really started manufacturing. We could then enlarge as rapidly as the business wanted to grow.

Of course there was the everlasting problem of financing! For when you start with only \$1,200, it doesn't last very long. But of course I had orders! So I went to the banker and said, "Look at my wonderful orders from Hudson Bay Company! You know how good that company is, and they will pay me the minute I deliver the swimsuits. So if you will just loan me the money

to buy the fabric and pay the people for sewing them, then I will pay you right back!”

But the banker said, “Why, that is not a banking proposition at all! Bankers never loan money that way! You have to have security, such as inventory, materials, and machines. You have to have capital investments! You have to have, oh, so many things!”

Then they told me that the only people I would ever find to finance a business like that would be private individuals with money. But I found that private individuals have their restrictions too. They do not like to take chances. So it took a good long time to get this business on a solid foundation. But all of the time orders were pouring in! People wanted the suits! And wonderful things were happening.

Moving to America

After I had been selling in Canada for a few years, I had the courage to order sewing machines to be delivered here in the United States. I had been watching what manufacturers were doing down here, and I could see that no one had approached the swimsuit business the way I had. I used to think, “I am sure the American girls will like my swimsuits just as much as girls do in Canada.”

I really wanted to live in the United States, for there was only a small branch of the Church in Vancouver—a very transient one. And I wanted my children to grow up where they could really have Mormon associations. Fortunately, Los Angeles was a place where there were so very many Mormons—to say nothing of that wonderful climate!

I thought, “All of the people in the world would like to move to Los Angeles, but most of them do not have the chance to earn a living there. But I do have the opportunity, so I am going to move to Los Angeles!”

So six years ago I started a business in Los Angeles.

For several years some people from Seattle had come up to Vancouver and bought my

suits to take back. Each time they would say to me, “If you ever want to start a business in the United States, we want to be with you.”

And I thought, “Little do you know of the trouble and problems you are asking for!”

But to them I said, “That would be very nice,” for they are very fine, sweet people and wonderful friends.

Right at first, when we planned to come to California, we found that the one business in the world that a banker would not finance was the swimsuit business!

They would say, “Oh, anything else, but not swimsuits! Why, the swimsuit business is controlled by the biggest brand-name companies in America! Rose Marie may be a big toad in the little puddle of Canada—but what is Canada?”

Or they would say, “It is not possible to succeed in the suit business. People have started swimsuit businesses down here and have gone broke the first year! Be realistic. Look at the money behind those big companies. All they would need to do is cut prices for one year and you would be wiped out! Why, we could not think of helping a new swimsuit company!”

So it really looked impossible, but our machines were delivered and we really did start a business.

Living the Gospel and Having Success

There are so many things I could tell you about just how this business started. Miraculous happenings have built this business—in spite of the predictions, in spite of bankers, in spite of other manufacturers, and even in spite of friends who said, “It is not possible for someone absolutely unknown to succeed in the United States in a business that is so tightly controlled by the very large companies that this is.”

Yet this business has grown from a start with less than a hundred people the first year to more than 900 people in six years. It has been one of the most phenomenal growths in the needle industry.

I wish you could know the people who are with me in business—for instance, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Kessler. Although they are not Mormons (I keep telling them that one of these days they are going to be), they do pay their tithing!

Every time there is a crisis in the business, I say to them, “I hope you have been living right,” and, believe me, they do. Mrs. Kessler has even stopped smoking, and Mr. Kessler never did smoke. For they are humble and recognize that success is a blessing from God and has to be deserved.

We all know our Father in Heaven has been very good to us. Sometimes when I am with Mormons, I am surprised to hear them say, “Rose Marie, I think it is wonderful that you have been so successful in business and yet have stayed a good member of the Church.”

I think each time I hear it, “That is backward! It is because I *am* a member of the Church that I have been successful in business. Can’t you understand that?”

I often think, when I look at young people who are starting in business, of something Dr. Harvey Fletcher said one time when I was in New York at a conference. He said, “It is not hard to be a Mormon among non-Mormons. All you have to do is tell your friends you are one, and they will see to it that you live it.”

I really did not realize the tremendous thing that he was saying until I learned that other people respect us, are proud to know us, and want us never to let them down. They want us to live up to our standards.

So if you want to know the very first and most important thing to do to become a success in business, it is this: tell everyone you meet that you are a Mormon and then live it to the utmost of your ability. As sure as you do, the most wonderful blessings will follow as automatically as day follows night.

I remember on one occasion, when I was just starting up in Los Angeles, my brother came to see us while we were setting up one hundred machines and cutting tables and building a

showroom. Well, you know, brothers treat kid sisters as though they will never grow up—as though they never really will have sense enough to come in out of the rain.

My brother innocently said, “Sis, how did you dare to do it?”

I said, “Hugh, I don’t dare. I am scared to death.”

And he said, “But not scared enough *not* to do it!”

But I have been very frightened, and that is a very humbling thing, believe me.

I remember five years later as I watched our great new factory growing and being built—that place in which we now have 900 people working. I looked at it and thought, “I can’t possibly think of designs enough for this! I cannot do it. This time I have undertaken too much.”

But we have been so greatly blessed that we have had to add still more to the building, which already looked like an airplane factory for size. Did I tell you we even have a swimming pool for employees?

Being Blessed by Integrity

One wonderful thing happened when we were just starting in the United States. We needed so much advertising! Believe me, we needed a budget a hundred times larger than we had. We were worrying about how to stretch our dollars.

I was commuting between here and Vancouver, and one day I was in Canada when Mr. Kessler phoned me and said, “Rose Marie, a very large company wants to use you in their advertising. They want to know when you will be back in New York so that you can be photographed in full color. They also want to show some of your suits. The ad will be on the backs of all of the prominent magazines in America. They will be on billboards, newspapers—everywhere! It will amount to about \$250,000 in free advertising for us, and they want to know when you will be back in New York for the photographs.”

I said, "Oh, Jack, tell them I will go anytime for that."

And he said, "There is only one hitch in it. You have to say that you smoke Camel cigarettes."

I said, "Oh, my goodness! Well, ask if I can say Camels must be the best because my partner smokes them."

And he said, "No, the slogan is 'Experience Is the Best Teacher,' and so they want you, and *you* have to say that."

I said, "Well, Jack, you know the answer. I couldn't possibly."

He said, "Don't answer now. I will call you tomorrow. You think about it."

Well, our budget for advertising that year—that we could afford to spend ourselves—was about \$30,000. So to get \$250,000 worth of free advertising would have been tremendous.

I went home that night to my children—who were seven, nine, and eleven—and I said, "How would you like to have someone advertise our business for us so we would have lots of money and we could buy a big, beautiful home with a swimming pool, cars, a horse for Bruce to ride, and everything you want?"

And they said, "Oh, Mommy, how?"

And I said, "A company wants to use me in its advertising. All I have to do is say I smoke Camel cigarettes."

And they said in disgust, "Oh, Mommy, we don't need a house. We have a house. Bruce can rent a horse, and we don't need a swimming pool."

And I thought, "Isn't that wonderful?"

So when Mr. Kessler called me the next day, I said, "Well, Jack, I am awfully sorry, but you know the answer. I really feel sorry about it because, after all, I am only part of the business. It is your business too, and I hate to deprive you of this advertising by saying no, but I just could not possibly do it."

Then the most wonderful thing happened. Mr. Kessler said, "Rose Marie, Nina and I talked this over, and we would have been

afraid for the future of this business if you had said yes. It will be made up to us many times. Don't you even give it another thought."

And I thought, "How very blessed I am that I could be associated with people who could have an understanding of Mormon principles like that."

And I was very happy when I saw that the Camel designer series of ads lasted only six months and not one swimsuit designer was ever featured on it. We all feel that it has been well worth the sacrifice, for this business has grown faster than we could cope with it!

Holding to a Standard

I would like to tell you another of my experiences. Often a number of our Church members say to me, "Aren't you exposed to very many temptations? Why, the lives people live when they travel on business are well known. How do you manage not to have to be part of it? When you go to parties and there is drinking, don't they want you to drink? Don't they want you to smoke?"

I have thought, "How can I get it over to the Mormon youngsters? Your outside friends prefer that you do not smoke! They prefer that you do not drink! They are honored to know you when you do not."

That is really true, and I have proved it so many times! Sometimes people I have been with have expected me to disapprove of them when they have been drinking, but I have said to them, "I don't mind what *you* do. You are not a Mormon. It is what *I* do that matters to me."

So they have been at ease and have not minded that I am different. In fact, when they introduce me, they often say, "This is Rose Marie Reid. She doesn't drink. She doesn't smoke. She's a Mormon, and she is likely to convert you if you are not careful."

Some of the most wonderful testimonies of Mormonism have been given to me by people with whom I have talked about it. So I want to tell all Mormons to go around and say to their

friends, "I am a Mormon," because the most amazing and the most exciting things happen. You find so many people who will say, "Is there a Mormon church here? I would like to go."

And you will say, "Yes, indeed, it is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that you see up there on the corner."

And they will say, "Why, I pass that every day. That is not Mormon, is it?"

Please, could we, in parentheses, under the sign "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" put the word *Mormon* and see how many, many people will learn for the first time that they mean the same thing?

We are told that we should say we are Latter-day Saints. But over a hundred years have been spent teaching people to know the name Mormon, and they do know it. They have come to have a very great respect for Mormon people. Even in the East, where they know very little about Mormonism, they have come to have a great respect for those people who are Mormons. They do not know the Latter-day Saints, and so I think it is like building a brand name and then dropping it after a hundred years of building up a good reputation.

When I talk to the Gleaner girls, I say to them, "It is true that many young men live by very different standards from the wonderful Mormon boys that you have been going out with. And yet no girl ever needs to step off her pedestal. No man ever takes her off it. He prefers that she stand right there, and he will treat her with every bit of the respect that she wants him to have."

And when I say "wants him to," I mean it is completely within her control. She need never worry nor compromise with her standards.

I want to tell you Mormon boys a story. Sir Richard Stafford Cripps of England said that as soon as he became a member of Parliament, he stopped drinking. When he would go to luncheons and see the other members of the Parliament "drinking the edge off their intellects," it made him stop drinking, for his

responsibility was too great to use only part of his mind for it (Patricia O'Flynn Strauss, *Cripps: Advocate and Rebel* [London: V. Gollancz Limited, 1943], 102).

And I thought, "If our Mormon people only knew the very definite business advantage they have over the people who go to luncheons and drink 'the edge off their intellects.'"

I watch those people drinking and see perfectly intelligent, brilliant businessmen become just 50 percent efficient with one or two drinks. Then I think, "If I could just tell the Mormons this so that they will know that they, with their clear minds and their 100 percent capabilities all of the time, can be any kind of success that they want to be in business, because they not only have the promises of blessings but the extra edge over competitors."

Seeking Obedience

My children ask, "How many blessings can you have?"

I always tell them, "It just depends on how many blessings you want, and then you keep that many commandments. If you only want half of the blessings, you only keep half of the commandments. If you only want to go to Sunday School half of the time, you will be blessed accordingly. If you want to pay half of your tithing, you will be blessed accordingly!"

The Lord has said, "Prove me and see. Pay all of your tithes and offerings, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there will be no room to contain" (see Malachi 3:10).

I read this scripture to the Kesslers, the people who are with me in business, and I said to them, "So you can pay your tithing by helping people establish homes in Jerusalem. But pay it in full—10 percent of your income. Because that promise is 'I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes'" (Malachi 3:11).

I said, "If translated that does not mean 'I will hold back your competitors,' I don't know any other meaning for it."

And I told them that since this promise is in the Old Testament, they could believe that it was directed to them too.

Then, of course, we have the Word of Wisdom and its promises that, if we keep it, wonderful things will follow. Each season, when it is time to start designing the next year's suits, I tell my children, "You be sure to pray that I shall know how to design."

A few weeks ago my little girl said to me, "This year, Mother, I am only going to pray for you. Last year I prayed for you *and* I worried so hard! But I didn't need to worry because look at the suits you made."

She meant the "Hourglass" suit, the new silhouette that, incidentally, is just sweeping the country. It is so successful that anyone who didn't know Rose Marie Reid suits before certainly does now. It really is outstanding, and I designed it this year. So that is what my daughter meant when she said, "Mother, I am still going to pray for you this year, but I am not going to worry."

We are promised that we will find treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures, if we keep the Word of Wisdom. Without that promise I should be terrified each year when I need to think up new designs. I need these hidden "treasures of knowledge" (D&C 89:19) more than anyone, for *I* do not know how to design. It is a gift from God.

In our early years we had an efficiency man look over our business, and he said, "The only weakness I find in your business is in the design department."

Now, that is me, alone.

Then he said to me, "Are you always going to be able to pull designs out of a hat? Isn't there some surer way? Couldn't you subscribe to a designing service from Paris or something like that so that you would know more about how to design?"

And I thought, "The service I subscribe to I could hardly describe to you."

Before closing I want to say something about patriarchal blessings, and as I look over all of

you people I think, "How many of you have had your patriarchal blessing?"

Do you know what a very wonderful guide that can be? Read it over. It belongs to you.

Let me tell you one thing mine says. It says, "You will be blessed with safety and success." And, believe me, that has been the most wonderful security.

Of course all blessings are dependent on worthiness. And I know I often wish I could telephone and say, "Our Father in Heaven, please, have I been good enough that I dare to get on a plane and fly to New York this week?"

I often wish I did have a little closer personal contact, but it has a very humbling effect when you know that your blessings depend upon your worthiness. But if you try, even though you fall short—and I certainly do—the Lord seems to bless you very generously anyway, for I know that I am the very most blessed woman in this whole world. I have three of the most wonderful children, who are very prayerful and who live with the thought of our Father in Heaven looking after them all of the time so that when I am away, they are not frightened and they are not worried and they feel that I am coming back safely. It is the most wonderful heritage that could possibly be given to them.

In conclusion, I repeat: living the gospel makes you successful in business. There isn't any other formula. It is wonderful to be able to say it to people who really know what I am talking about. I do not have to talk around it, saying, "Well, our advertising plan does one part, and our sales organization does another part, and if you follow our example, that will make you successful."

Organization is only a small part of it. The most important part of it is that great promise that makes you humble in the face of it.

I thank you again for letting me come here to talk to you. May the blessings of the Lord be with you always, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.