

Student Name

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### More Than a Hobby

The trailer is backed up to the entrance of the shed. It's time to start packing for our camping trip. Out come two garbage cans overflowing with thick metal poles and durable canvas: the tent. The wood-burning stove, cots, army sleeping bags, and camping chairs come next. The trailer is almost full, and yet out rolls a couple of generators, a portable toilet, and a shower tent. The wheels of the trailer sag under the strain of thousands of pounds of emergency preparedness supplies, and the food storage hasn't even been added to the load. What originally began as an overnighter church campout has transformed into another one of my dad's full-blown emergency preparedness disaster run-throughs.

It seems that no matter what my family is doing, my dad always manages to turn the conversation or the activity to emergency preparedness and food storage. He has packed multiple rooms, sheds, and our garage to the brim with food storage. He has collected supplies and food since before I was born, but there has yet to be an emergency where any of it has been necessary. While I can appreciate his dedication, it has sometimes seemed a bit over the top. So, I decided to approach my dad about his seeming obsession with emergency preparedness. My dad's response was, "I consider it my responsibility to be ready at all times." Responsibility has been a primary driving force for my dad throughout his life.

Growing up on a small farm in rural Maeser, Utah required my dad to accept more responsibility at a young age. He learned the importance of hard work and learned to be grateful for what he was given. With cows, pigs, horses, and chickens as well as vast farming land to cultivate

crops, he said, “I learned that animals are for man’s use as well as the food that we would harvest.”

To my dad, food has always been viewed as a gift from God that is to be utilized to its full potential.

With my dad being the youngest of eight children, survival was an underlying skill he learned to utilize in everything he did. Through his experiences, my dad learned never to waste anything and to be responsible with what he received. Throughout his childhood, his parents had food storage in their basement, but the buckets of wheat constantly spilled inviting rats and mice making the food unsanitary. Other food was also usually inedible since it was never rotated with new food because the family couldn’t afford it. As he reflected on this experience, my dad mused that his parent’s inattention to the food storage impacted him in such a way that it “influenced me because I thought I could do a better job than they did.”

When he became a husband, my dad began to immediately start storing food and preparedness supplies. He has always believed that it is his duty to ensure that his wife and children are always cared for, and he feels that in order to be properly fulfill that responsibility he must be prepared for the unexpected. His feelings about his fatherly responsibilities were cemented in an experience he had when Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. The floods had come in all around the Super Dome football stadium and people had taken refuge inside without any food or supplies. He remembers a camera filming a man holding up his baby and shouting “who’s gonna feed my baby?” Witnessing that man’s tragic situation evoked powerful emotions in my dad and right then he decided he never wanted that to happen to him. “I’m responsible. I’m the one that’s going to feed my baby. I’m going to be the one to feed my family. I’m not going to rely on someone else to come in to feed my baby.” Eleven years later, he can still recall that moment like it was yesterday.

Some people, myself included, have thought that he spends too much money on food storage. With countless buckets of wheat and rice making their way through our door often, not to

mention the endless case lot sale purchases, who could blame them? When I asked him if he felt like he spent too much, he paused to think for a moment and then concluded that he considers food storage as a form of life insurance. Just like a person would purchase life insurance for their family in case anything were to happen, my dad views food storage and emergency supplies as an insurance that will help him to support his family in unforeseen emergencies. “I may never use it like many people never use insurance,” he said, “but it’s there in case something does happen.” Each month, just like an insurance payment, he budgets a certain amount of money to spend on food storage to keep him on track. It is through knowing that his family has a “backup insurance policy” that he has found fulfillment in his responsibilities.

Having this food storage enables my dad to feel more secure physically and also helps him to fulfil a personal spiritual responsibility as well. Every comment he shared with me about why he gathered so much food storage always inevitably mentioned following church leaders and believing prophet’s words. In every action he does, my dad is constantly processing the spiritual ramifications of what he is doing. In an emergency, his greatest fear is going hungry—not because of death but because of what he might do if he or his family began to starve. “I believe that when a person goes hungry they will do almost anything to get food,” he confessed, “that includes breaking the law, breaking the commandments, and doing things I would never have conceived of doing before.” He wants to ensure that no one in his family will be put in a future situation where it would necessary to compromise gospel values because he hadn’t gathered sufficient supplies. My dad strongly believes that part of his eternal salvation depends on him having food storage to keep him and his family together not only in this life, but for eternity.

As my dad described his experiences and the moments that impacted him surrounding emergency preparedness and food storage, I have had to pause and reevaluate my perceptions of what I thought was just an overkill hobby my dad enjoyed. As we were concluding our interview

over the phone, his last words to me would normally have sent my eyes rolling heavenward and an exasperated sigh to escape my lips. He asked if I had my emergency kit and if I needed anything else to feel safe. But instead of my eyes rolling heavenward, my eyes teared up because now I knew from his experiences that it was more than just a hobby to him—it was a fulfilment of a much deeper responsibility. I now understand that my dad's actions have prepared my family for the worst and his actions have shown his love. So the next time he starts packing up the trailer for another disaster run-through, instead of rolling my eyes and moaning, I think I'll run and give him a big hug.

Work Cited

Interviewee Last Name, First Name. Telephone interview. 28 April 2016.