

# PURE RELIGION

## Bitter Integrity

At 4:00 every morning, 86-year-old Joseph Melvin Bitter reaches for his alarm, arises from bed, and prepares for another day at work. Because of previous problems with glaucoma, he spends an hour taking care of his eyes, painstakingly inserting drops that require him to close his eyes each time until the medicine has had a chance to work. He is also slowed down by asthma, which developed while he served a mission in the 1930s.

At 5:25, he leaves his Kaysville, Utah, home and walks to the bus stop 15 minutes away. In the winter, he leaves 10 minutes earlier to allow time to wade through the heavy snow and ice. Because he has to wait to transfer buses, it takes him a couple of hours to arrive at his job at Welfare Square in Salt Lake City. When the day is over, Brother Bitter once again makes the long journey home and, once there, begins the hour-long process of caring for his eyes.

Brother Bitter spends his days at Welfare Square testing dozens of products—from soup to salsa. He tests them inside and out, ensuring that they are healthy, tasty, and nutritious. He checks the packages, the wrapping paper, the taste, the temperature, the toughness. He ensures there are no harmful bacteria that could make a child ill. He ensures that the products at Welfare Square—“the finest products money can’t buy”—are of the highest quality. For these products will end up in the homes of those in need. They will go to feed the Lord’s poor.

“It’s all about integrity,” he says.

Integrity is something Brother Bitter knows something about. His work is all about ensuring

that what is on the inside of the products is pure, good, and wholesome. Outside of work, he does much the same thing. He and his wife, Nelma, talk to their 9 children, 67 grandchildren, and 42 great-grandchildren about integrity all the time.

“Be honorable,” he tells them. “Give service, be honest, live the commandments, and keep the covenants you make, and you can’t help but be successful.”



He talks of how many of his grandchildren have served missions—22; of the number married in the temple—20; of the many years he and his wife have been married—63. All of these numbers add up to a lifetime of integrity.

Although he and his wife have lived through their share of sorrowful experiences, on the whole, life for the Bitters has been very sweet.

After 86 years, Brother Bitter feels like his life has turned out pretty well. “My greatest goal now,” he says, “is to endure to the end. I’m approaching the summit, and I can tell I’m getting closer. I just want to finish the race well.”

One of the ways he does that is by ensuring integrity in the products in the bishops’ storehouse system and in himself and by encouraging it in his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

“Just live the gospel,” he tells his family, “and you’ll be all right.”

That is good advice coming from Brother Melvin Bitter, a man whose business it is to test for integrity each and every day.