

# PURE RELIGION

## One Cold and Snowy Afternoon

It was a cold and snowy day at the bishops' storehouse in Lindon, Utah, and the forecasters were predicting more snow during the next several days. A man with a multicolored bicycle helmet walked up to the bishops' storehouse. He was bundled up and had a towel wrapped around his neck for warmth. Most of his teeth were missing, and those that were still there were badly decayed. His clothes were dirty and worn.

Within a few minutes of talking with this helmet-clad stranger, our newest welfare missionary had tears streaming down her cheeks. He had come to the storehouse because he thought it was a place he could get food stamps. This sister missionary had never talked to a homeless person. In fact, she had never seen anyone quite like him up close. Her heart was deeply touched as she talked to this seemingly forgotten child of God.

Since he didn't have a bishop's order, she went into our kitchen and took some of the food from the lunch we had just finished, put it in a sack, and took it outside to give to our new friend. When she returned, still misty eyed, she was told that the bishop who serves transients could make out a bishop's order and provide something for him to eat for a few days—something he could carry on his bicycle.

We approached him and started a conversation. It was apparent that he was mentally challenged, but he was able to express his appreciation for the help that was offered. All he wanted was something to eat and to get to a place that was warm. I noticed his bicycle leaning against a tree out in front of our store. He had two large plastic bags hanging from the front handlebars and two large saddle-type bags hung over the fender of the rear tire. It appeared

that everything this man owned was either on his body or on that bicycle. He traveled by pushing this rickety bike and slept in a makeshift tent.

We called the transient bishop in Provo and asked him to arrange for the man to stay the night in a nearby hotel. One of our male senior missionaries offered to load the man and his possessions, including the bicycle, into the back of a pickup truck and take him to the hotel. As the missionary helped him carry his "things" to his room, he noticed that his sleeping bag consisted of a wet blanket wrapped in a piece of blue plastic. His bicycle was held together with pieces of wire. When the missionary returned to the storehouse, we learned that this man had come from Panguitch, Utah, and was headed to St. George but had gotten confused and came north to Utah County.

He mentioned that he knew of a campground in Nephi where he could stay and not be hurt or bothered. Evidently, this simple man had encountered some physical abuse during his hard life on the road. Our transient bishop met with the man the following morning at the hotel to determine if he was mentally capable of getting to and surviving in a warmer place like St. George. The bishop bought him a bus ticket to St. George, called the manager of Deseret Industries in St. George, and talked with the bishop assigned to work with transients to see if someone could meet him at the bus depot. Once there, they arranged for a room for the night and got him a usable bicycle from Deseret Industries. When our sister missionary witnessed what the Lord's welfare plan could do to care for the truly poor and needy, her tears of sadness turned into tears of joy.

