

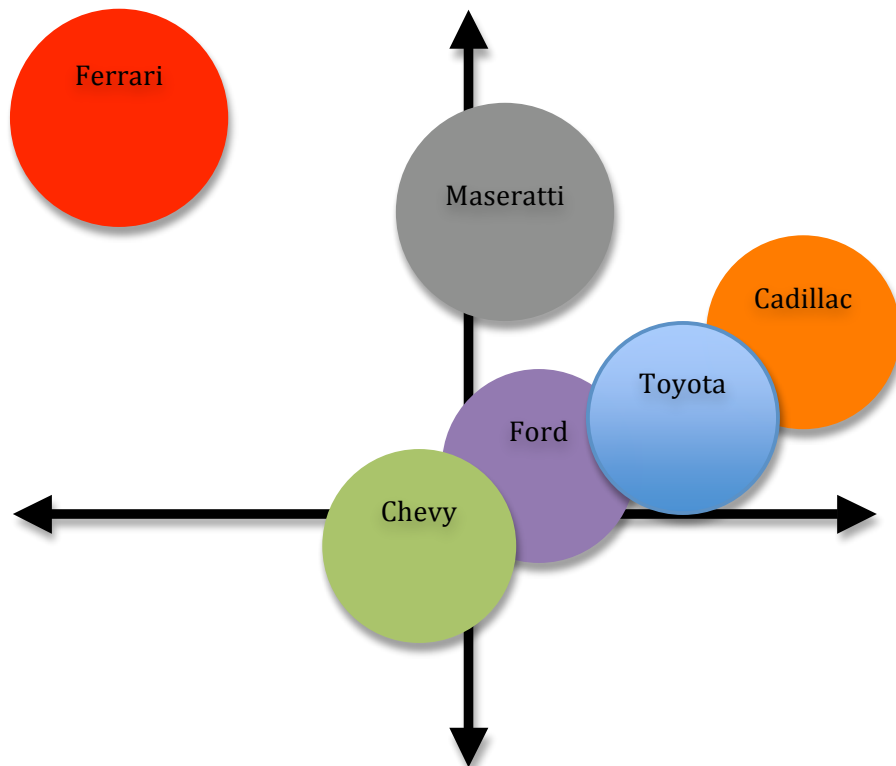
An Attempted Academic Look at Self-Reliance, and the Unexpectedly Beautiful Results.

The Idea

Today's Sunday School lesson covered the topic of developing self-reliance, both spiritual and temporal. The noteworthy aspect of the discussion that ensued in class was how it took on a life of its own and how I needed to keep an open mind to the input from class and learn from them. In the end, my planned lesson and conclusions were undeveloped thoughts that lacked the wisdom that my class displayed today. But ultimately, I feel as though the purposes of the lesson were met in facilitating a stimulating discussion with many points a view that brought out several Gospel principles aimed out strengthening one's self reliance.

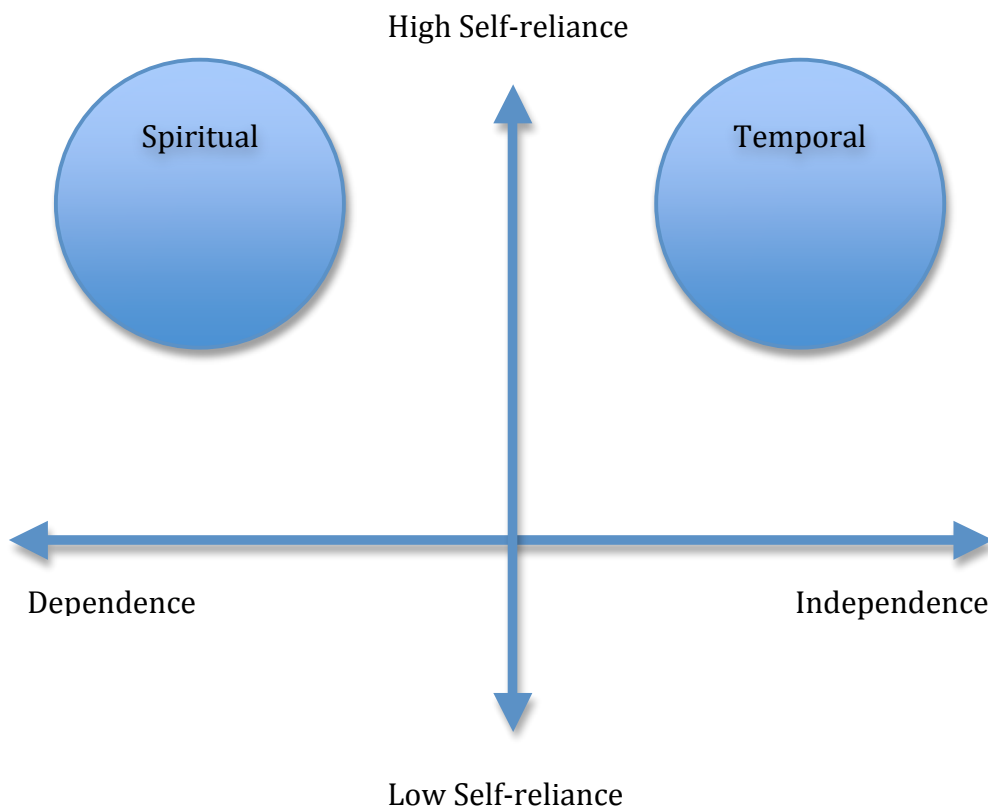
During preparation, the thought of the product placement grid came into my mind, which is a common model used in marketing and product & brand design. My idea placed high-to-low self-reliance on the Y-axis, and dependence (dependent to independent) on the X-axis. With gratitude to God, I felt as though it was a great approach to the lesson.

To understand the idea behind the grid, I'll use the auto industry as an example, which is often used as an example in business school. Quality represents the X-axis, and price represents the Y-axis. From my perception, here is where a few cars are:



Of course, this is not a scientific study. Ferrari is a finely tuned race car and wasn't designed to be a reliable commuter car, and the companies themselves would argue they are located differently. Ask any Chevy owner and they would beg to differ at being a lesser car to Ford and possibly Toyota. But I do think my point with the graph has been made.

When I was thinking about the locations of temporal and spiritual self-reliance, I had it in my mind that through living the Gospel, my temporal self-reliance would trend towards independence, while my spiritual would trend towards dependence. According to my mind's logic, I figured that as my faith in Christ increased I would naturally be more and more reliant on him.



The Original Plan

My plan for the lesson included constructing and discussing the above graph, noting how we must deal with an independence in our temporal lives while

developing a strong relationship with Christ that would simultaneously develop a dependency in Him. Some of my planned questions were:

Developing Spiritual Self-reliance:

- What does it mean to be spiritually self-reliant?
- In what ways are we spiritually self-reliant or become spiritually self-reliant?
- What are some ways to develop this principle in our lives? In what ways will we be blessed for doing so?
- If we are parents, are there other ways to help our children learn spiritual self-reliance? I contend that all of the ways that apply to teaching children likely will apply to us as adults as well.

Developing Temporal Self-reliance:

- What is temporal self-reliance?
- List some “qualities” of someone who is spiritually self-reliant:
 - Work
 - “To become self-reliant, a person must work. Work is physical, mental, or spiritual effort. It is a basic source of happiness, self-worth, and prosperity. Through work, people accomplish many good things in their lives” (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* [1998], 257).
 - Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve said, “Work is always a spiritual necessity even if, for some, work is not an economic necessity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 50; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 38).
 - Food Storage
 - Financial

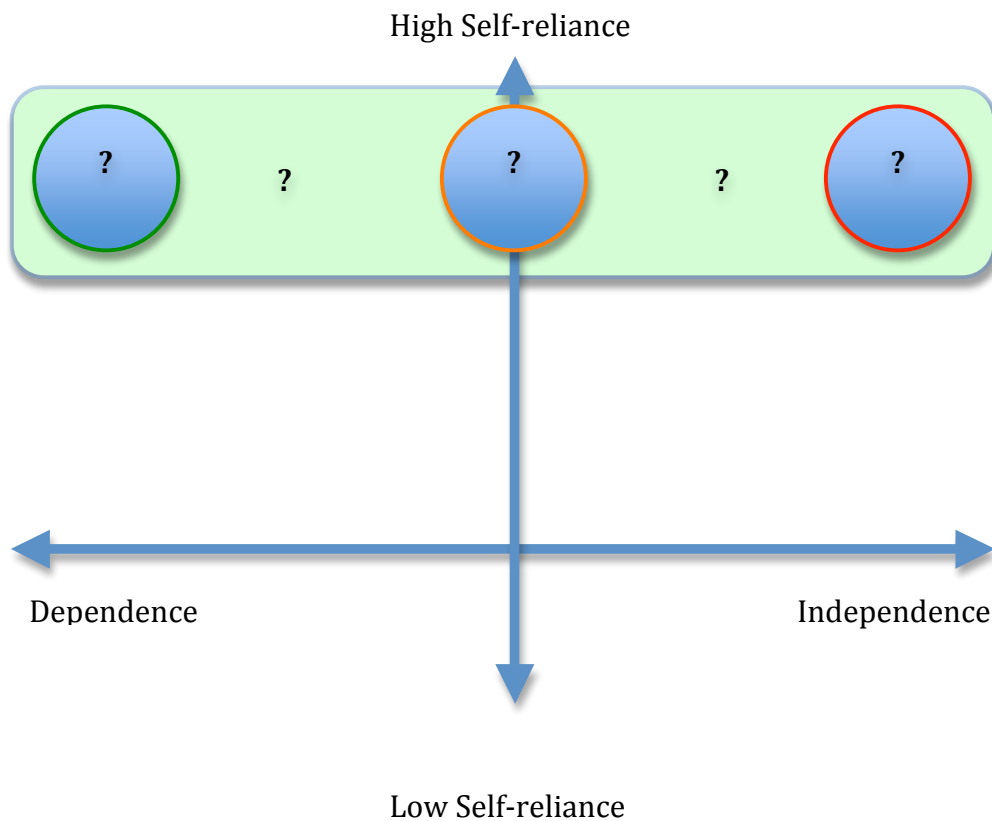
Service and caring for the “poor and needy”.

- D&C 44:6 Behold, I say unto you, that ye must visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief, that they may be kept until all things may be done according to my law which ye have received. Amen.
- In D&C 104:13–18, the Lord explains His way of providing for the temporal needs of His children. What is the Lord’s “own way” of providing for the poor? What is our responsibility when we receive of the Lord’s abundance? (See also Jacob 2:17–19.)

Explain that providing for the poor and needy in the Lord's "own way" means helping those who are in need by giving according to what we have received from God. It means giving freely and lovingly, recognizing that Heavenly Father is the source of all blessings and that we are responsible to use them in the service of others. Those who receive this help should accept it with gratitude. They should use it to release themselves from the limitations of their need and to become more able to rise to their full potential. They should then reach out to help others.

What Happened

I set up the grid and explained the auto example so the class would understand what the model was attempting to explain. I then asked where they felt spiritual self-reliance would be. The first man said it would be high, but in the center of dependence and independence line, noting our daily struggles as we go through life. The second man, reasoning that it is by our choices and responsibilities that we increase our self-reliance, so he felt that it would trend towards the right.



So the first two responses were not the answers that I had hypothesized and had prepared to talk about! The set-up to my lesson was now wide open and thoughts from several different points of view had come in, each giving a different answer. I was forced to quickly reorganize my lesson and plan, so I let the discussion take on a life of its own. The result was a terrific discussion.

As the discussion carried on, principles of prayer, humility, obedience, and scripture study were all spoken of as being very important factors that play a role in our dependence. We agreed that each one of these was very important in creating a great level of spiritual independence that led us towards faith in Christ, and ultimately a dependence on him. This dependent independence is what we are all striving to achieve. And one comment was made said that as we depend on the Lord, we are given greater and greater independence, just like having to loose ourselves in the work of the Lord to find ourselves within.

Another comment talked about charity, and that a possible indicator of the level of our spiritual self-reliance is our willingness to give to others. I used this comment to transition into the last part of my prepared lesson, that on charity. Here I was able to return to my lesson as planned. I was impressed with the spiritual nature of the concept of giving to the poor and needy and our understanding that it more than giving money, but it is most often sharing our time and talents.

So the graph might never be an accurate way to depict our dependence and independence spiritually. However, it worked as a great tool to induce a thought provoking discussion in which over a dozen people participated with their own experiences.