

# Knowing, Loving, and Growing

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*Of the Seventy*

May we all come to understand our part in this great ministering work so that we will become more like Him.

In 2016 The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square came to visit the Netherlands and Belgium. And since I was involved in that exciting event, I had the opportunity to enjoy their performance twice.



During their performance I was thinking about what a tremendous undertaking it was to move a choir of that size. My mind was drawn to the big gong, which was difficult and probably costly to ship over in comparison with the violin, the trumpet, or other instruments you could easily carry under your arm. But looking at the actual involvement of this gong, I realized it was only hit a few times, whereas the other smaller instruments were involved for most of the concert. I reflected that without the sound of the gong, the performance would not be the same and so the effort had to be made to move this big gong all the way across the ocean.



Sometimes we might feel that we are, like that gong, good enough only to play a minor part in the performance. But let me tell you that your sound is making all the difference.

We need all instruments. Some of us learn easily and do very well in school, while others have artistic talents. Some design and build things or nurse, protect, or teach others. We are all needed to bring color and meaning to this world.

To those who feel they do not have anything to contribute or believe that they are of no importance or consequence to anybody, to others who might feel they are on top of the world, and anybody in between, I would like to address this message.

Wherever you are on the path of life, some of you might feel so overburdened that you do not even consider yourself on that path. I want to invite you to step out of the darkness into the light. The gospel light will provide warmth and healing and will help you understand who you really are and what your purpose in life is.

Some of us have been wandering on forbidden paths, trying to find happiness there.

We are invited by a loving Heavenly Father to walk the path of discipleship and to return to Him. He loves us with a perfect love.<sup>1</sup>

What is the way? The way is to help each other understand who we are by ministering to each other.

To me, ministering is exercising divine love.<sup>2</sup> In that way we create an environment where both the giver and receiver obtain a desire to repent. In other words, we change direction and come closer to and become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ.

For instance, there is no need to constantly tell our spouse or children how they can improve; they know that already. It is in creating this environment of love that

they will be empowered to make the necessary changes in their lives and become better people.

In this way repentance becomes a daily process of refining that might include apologizing for poor behavior. I remember and still experience situations where I have been too quick to judge or too slow to listen. And at the end of the day, during my personal prayer, I felt loving counsel from heaven to repent and become better. The loving environment first created by my parents, brother, and sisters and later by my wife, children, and friends has helped me to become a better person.

We all know where we can do better. There is no need to repeatedly remind each other, but there is a need to love and minister to each other and, in doing so, provide a climate of willingness to change.

In this same environment we are learning who we really are and what our role will be in this last chapter of the world's history prior to the Second Coming of the Savior.

If you are wondering about your part, I would like to invite you to find a place where you can be alone and ask Heavenly Father to make known to you which part to play. The answer will probably come gradually and then more clearly when we have set our feet more firmly on the covenant and ministering path.

We are experiencing some of the same difficulties that Joseph Smith confronted while he was "in the midst of [a] war of words and tumult of opinions." As we read in his own account, he often said to himself: "What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which [one] is it, and how shall I know it?"<sup>3</sup>

With the knowledge he found in the Epistle of James, which states, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him,"<sup>4</sup> Joseph "at length came to the determination to 'ask of God.'"<sup>5</sup>

We further read that "it was the first time in [his] life that [he] had made such an attempt, for amidst all [his] anxieties [he] had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally."<sup>6</sup>

And so it can be for us the very first time we address our Maker in a way that we have never done before.

Because of Joseph's attempt, Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him, calling him by name, and as a result we have a much clearer understanding of who we are and that we really do matter.

We further read that in his tender teenage years, Joseph "was persecuted by those who ought to have been [his] friends and [who were supposed] to have treated [him] kindly."<sup>7</sup> And so we might expect some opposition as we are living a life of discipleship.

If you currently feel you are not able to be part of the orchestra and the path of repentance appears difficult to you, please know that if we keep at it, the burden will be taken from our shoulders and there will be light again. Heavenly Father will never leave us when we reach for Him. We can fall and get up, and He will help us brush off the dirt from our knees.

Some of us are wounded, but the first-aid kit of the Lord has bandages big enough to cover all of our wounds.

So it is that love, that perfect love that we also call charity or “the pure love of Christ,”<sup>8</sup> which is needed in our homes where parents minister to their children and children to their parents. Through that love, hearts will be changed and desires born to do His will.

It is that love that is needed in our dealings with each other as children of our Heavenly Father and as members of His Church and that will enable us to include all the musical instruments in our orchestras so we will be able to perform gloriously with the angelic choirs of heaven when the Savior comes again.

It is that love, that light that needs to shine and brighten our surroundings as we go about our daily lives. People will notice the light and will be drawn to it. That is the kind of missionary work that will draw others to “*come and see, come and help, and come and stay.*”<sup>9</sup> Please, when you have received your witness about this great work and our part in it, let us rejoice together with our beloved Prophet Joseph Smith, who declared, “For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it.”<sup>10</sup>

I testify to you that I know who I am, and I do know who you are. We are all children of a Heavenly Father who loves us. And He did not send us here to fail but to return gloriously to Him. That we may all come to understand our part in this great ministering work so that we will become more like Him when the Savior comes again is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.