

Poor Little Ones

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Of the Seventy

In each ward and branch we need everyone—those who may be strong and those who are perhaps struggling. All are necessary.

As a boy, I remember driving in the car with my father and seeing individuals on the roadside who had found themselves in difficult circumstances or who needed help. My father would always make the comment “*Pobrecito*,” which means “poor little one.”

On occasion, I watched with interest as my father would help many of these people, especially when we would travel to Mexico to see my grandparents. He would typically find someone in need and then go privately and provide the help they needed. I later discovered that he was helping them enroll in school, buy some food, or provide in some way or another for their well-being. He was ministering to a “poor little one” who came across his path. In fact, in my growing-up years I cannot remember a time when we did not have someone living with us who needed a place to stay as they became self-reliant. Watching these experiences created in me a spirit of compassion toward my fellow men and women and for those in need.

In *Preach My Gospel* it states: “You are surrounded by people. You pass them on the street, visit them in their homes, and travel among them. They are all children of God, your brothers and sisters. ... Many of these people are searching for purpose in life. They are concerned for their future and their families” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2018], 1).

Throughout the years, while serving in the Church, I have tried to seek after those who needed help in their lives, both temporally and spiritually. I would often hear the voice of my father saying, “*Pobrecito*,” poor little one.

In the Bible we find a wonderful example of caring for a poor little one:

“Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

“And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

“Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

“And Peter, *fastening his eyes upon him* with John, said, Look on us.

“And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

“Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

“And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength” (Acts 3:1–7; emphasis added).

In reading this account, I was intrigued by the use of the word *fastening*. The word *fastening* means to direct one’s eyes or thoughts to or to look intently at (see “fasten,” Dictionary.com). As Peter looked at this man, he saw him differently than others. He looked past his inability to walk and his weaknesses and could discern that his faith was adequate to become healed and enter into the temple to receive the blessings he was seeking.

I noticed that he took him by the right hand and lifted him up. As he assisted the man in this way, the Lord miraculously healed him, and “his feet and ankle bones received strength” (Acts 3:7). His love for this man and a desire to help him caused an increase of capacity and ability in the man who was weak.

While serving as an Area Seventy, I reserved each Tuesday night to do ministering visits with the stake presidents in my area of responsibility. I invited them to make appointments with those who were in need of an ordinance of the gospel of Jesus Christ or who were not currently keeping the covenants they had made. Through our consistent and intentional ministering, the Lord magnified our efforts and we were able to find individuals and families who were in need. These were the “poor little ones” who lived in the different stakes where we served.

On one occasion, I accompanied President Bill Whitworth, the president of the Sandy Utah Canyon View Stake, to do ministering visits. He was prayerful about whom we should visit, trying to have the same experience as Nephi, who “was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do” (1 Nephi 4:6). He demonstrated that as we minister, we should be led by revelation to those who are most in need, as opposed to just going down a list or visiting individuals in a methodical way. We should be led by the power of inspiration.

I remember going into the home of a young couple, Jeff and Heather, and their little boy, Kai. Jeff grew up an active member of the Church. He was a very talented athlete and had a promising career. He began to drift away from the Church in his teenage years. Later, he got into a car accident, which altered the course of his life. As we entered their home and became acquainted, Jeff asked us why we came to see his family. We responded that there were about 3,000 members who lived within the stake boundaries. I then asked him, “Jeff, of all the homes we could have visited tonight, tell us why the Lord has sent us here.”

With that, Jeff became emotional and began to share with us some of his worries and some issues that they were dealing with as a family. We began to share various principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We invited them to do a few specific things that might seem to be challenging at first but in time would bring great happiness

and joy. Then President Whitworth gave Jeff a priesthood blessing to help him overcome his challenges. Jeff and Heather agreed to do what we invited them to do.

About a year later, it was my privilege to watch Jeff baptize his wife, Heather, a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are now preparing themselves to enter the temple to be sealed as a family for time and all eternity. Our visit altered the course of their lives both temporally and spiritually.

The Lord has stated:

“Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (Doctrine and Covenants 81:5).

“And in doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord” (Doctrine and Covenants 81:4).

Brothers and sisters, the Apostle Paul taught a key element in our ministering. He taught that we are all “the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Corinthians 12:27) and that each member of the body is needed in order to ensure that the entire body is edified. Then he taught a powerful truth that entered deeply into my heart when I read it. He said, “Much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, *are necessary*: and those members of the body, which we think to be *less honourable*, upon these we bestow *more abundant honour*” (1 Corinthians 12:22–23; emphasis added).

Hence, in each ward and branch we need everyone—those who may be strong and those who are perhaps struggling. All are necessary to the vital edification of the entire “body of Christ.” I often wonder who we are missing in our various congregations that would strengthen us and make us whole.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught: “In the Church we not only learn divine doctrine; we also experience its application. As the body of Christ, the members of the Church minister to one another in the reality of day-to-day life. All of us are imperfect. ... In the body of Christ, we have to go beyond concepts and exalted words and have a real ‘hands-on’ experience as we learn to ‘live together in love’ [Doctrine and Covenants 42:45]” (“Why the Church,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 108–9).

In 1849, Brigham Young had a dream in which he saw the Prophet Joseph Smith driving a large herd of sheep and goats. Some of these animals were large and beautiful; others were small and dirty. Brigham Young recalled looking into the Prophet Joseph Smith’s eyes and saying, “Joseph, you have got the darndest flock ... I ever saw in my life; what are you going to do with them?” The Prophet, who seemed unconcerned with this unruly flock, simply replied, “[Brigham,] they are all good in their places.”

When President Young awoke, he understood that while the Church would gather a variety of “sheep and goats,” it was his responsibility to bring all in and allow

each of them to realize their full potential as they took their places in the Church. (Adapted from Ronald W. Walker, “Brigham Young: Student of the Prophet,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 56–57.)

Brothers and sisters, the genesis of my talk came about as I thought deeply about *one* who is not currently engaged in the Church of Jesus Christ. For a moment I would like to speak to each one of them. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has taught that “such individuals often stay proximate to—but do not participate fully in—the Church. They will not come inside the chapel, but neither do they leave its porch. These are they who need and are needed by the Church, but who, in part, ‘live without God in the world’ [Mosiah 27:31]” (“Why Not Now?,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 12).

I would echo the invitation of our beloved President Russell M. Nelson as he first spoke to the membership of the Church. He said: “Now, to each member of the Church I say, keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.”

He then pleaded: “Now, if you have stepped off the path, may I invite you with all the hope in my heart to please come back. Whatever your concerns, whatever your challenges, there is a place for you in this, the Lord’s Church. You and generations yet unborn will be blessed by your actions *now* to return to the covenant path” (“As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7; emphasis added).

I bear witness of Him, even Jesus Christ, the Master Minister and Savior of us all. I invite each of us to seek out the “*pobrecitos*,” the “poor little ones” among us who are in need. This is my hope and prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.