

# Serve

By Elder Carl B. Cook  
Of the Seventy

Every member is needed, and every member needs an opportunity to serve.

As a boy I enjoyed working with my Uncle Lyman and Aunt Dorothy on their farm. Uncle Lyman usually led our projects, and Aunt Dorothy often assisted and drove the old Dodge truck. I remember the rush of adrenaline when we got bogged down in the mud or tried to climb a steep hill: Uncle Lyman would yell, "Put 'er in compound, Dorothy!" That's when I started to pray. Somehow, with the Lord's help and after some grinding of gears, Aunt Dorothy found compound. With all wheels locked in and churning, the truck lunged forward and our work continued.

"Putting it in compound" refers to shifting into a special gear in which a number of gears are arranged to work together to generate more torque.<sup>1</sup> A compound gear, along with four-wheel drive, allows you to gear down, power up, and move.

I like to think of each of us as part of a compound gear as we serve together in the Church—in wards and branches, in quorums and auxiliaries. Just as gears combine to provide greater power in compound, we have greater power when we join together. As we unite to serve one another, we accomplish much more together than we could on our own. It is thrilling to be engaged and unified as we serve and assist in the Lord's work.

## Serving Is a Blessing

The opportunity to serve is one of the great blessings of membership in the Church.<sup>2</sup> The Lord has said, "If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me,"<sup>3</sup> and we serve Him by serving others.<sup>4</sup>

As we serve, we draw closer to God.<sup>5</sup> We come to know Him in ways that we otherwise might not. Our faith in Him increases. Our problems are put into perspective. Life becomes more satisfying. Our love for others increases, as well as our desire to serve. Through this blessed process, we become more like God, and we are better prepared to return to Him.<sup>6</sup>

As President Marion G. Romney taught: "Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made."<sup>7</sup>

## Serving Can Be Challenging

Serving in the Church, however, can be challenging if we are asked to do something that frightens us, if we grow weary of serving, or if we are called to do something that we do not initially find appealing.

Recently I received a new assignment. I had been serving in the Africa Southeast Area. It was thrilling to serve where the Church is relatively young and being established, and we loved the Saints. Then I was called to return to Church headquarters, and to be honest, I was less than enthusiastic. A change in assignment brought some unknowns.

One night after contemplating the upcoming change, I dreamed about my great-great-grandfather Joseph Skeen. I knew from his journal that when he and his wife, Maria, moved to Nauvoo, he desired to serve, so he sought out the Prophet Joseph Smith and asked how he could help. The Prophet sent him to work on the prairie and told him to do the best he could, so he did. He worked on the Smiths' farm.<sup>8</sup>

I pondered the privilege that Joseph Skeen had in receiving his assignment that way. Suddenly I realized that I have the same privilege, as we all do. All Church callings come from God—through His appointed servants.<sup>9</sup>

I felt a distinct spiritual confirmation that my new assignment was inspired. It is important that we make that connection—that our callings literally come to us from God through our priesthood leaders. After this experience, my attitude changed, and I was filled with a deep desire to serve. I am grateful for the blessing of repentance and for my changed heart. I love my new assignment.

Even if we think that our Church calling was simply our priesthood leader's idea or that it came to us because no one else would accept it, we will be blessed as we serve. But when we recognize God's hand in our calling and serve with all our hearts, additional power comes into our service, and we become true servants of Jesus Christ.

## Serving Requires Faith

Fulfilling callings requires faith. Shortly after Joseph began working on the farm, he and Maria became very sick. They had no money and were among strangers. It was a difficult time for them. In his journal, Joseph wrote, "We worked along [and] hung on to the Church with what little faith we had, though the devil tried to destroy us and turn us back."<sup>10</sup>

I, along with hundreds of other descendants, will be eternally grateful that Joseph and Maria did not turn back. Blessings come as we persevere in our callings and responsibilities and hang on with all the faith we have.

I know a wonderful Gospel Doctrine teacher who lifts class members as she teaches, but that wasn't always the case. After joining the Church, she received a calling to teach in Primary. She felt she had no teaching skills, but because she knew the importance of serving, she accepted. Fear quickly overcame her, and she stopped attending so she wouldn't have to teach. Thankfully, her home teacher noticed her absence, visited her, and invited her back. The bishop and ward members assisted her. Eventually, with increased faith, she began teaching children. As she applied principles now taught in *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, the Lord blessed her efforts and she became a gifted teacher.<sup>11</sup>

The natural man or woman in all of us is inclined to allow us to excuse ourselves from serving for reasons such as "I am not ready to serve; I have more to learn," "I'm tired and need a break," "I'm too old—it's someone else's turn," or "I am simply too busy."

Brothers and sisters, accepting and fulfilling a calling is an act of faith. We can trust in what our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, repeatedly teaches: "Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies" and "When we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help."<sup>12</sup> Whether we are overwhelmed or underwhelmed, whether we are scared to death or bored to death, the Lord wants us to gear down, power up, and serve.

I see no signs that President Monson and his associates in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve are too busy or too tired. They exemplify in an inspiring way the power that comes into our lives as we exercise faith, accept assignments, and fulfill them with commitment and dedication. They "put [their shoulders] to the wheel"<sup>13</sup> many years ago, and they continue to push forward, onward, and upward.

Yes, they serve in important callings, but *every* calling or assignment is important. President Gordon B. Hinckley, a previous prophet and President of the Church, said: "We are all in this great endeavor together. ... Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence."<sup>14</sup> Every calling is important.<sup>15</sup>

## Let Us Serve

Let us rise up in faith, "put [our shoulders] to the wheel," and move this "worthy work along."<sup>16</sup> Let's "put it in compound," along with faithful Aunt Dorothy. As brothers and sisters, let's serve.

If you want to make your bishop's or branch president's day, ask him the questions "How can I help?" "Where would the Lord have me serve?" As he prays and considers your personal, family, and employment responsibilities, he will be inspired to extend an appropriate calling. As you are set apart, you will receive a priesthood blessing to help you succeed. You *will* be blessed! Every member is needed, and every member needs an opportunity to serve.<sup>17</sup>

## Jesus Christ Is Our Exemplar

Jesus Christ, our great Exemplar, gave His life to His Father's work. In the Grand Council before this world was organized, Jesus, chosen and anointed from the beginning, volunteered, "Here am I, send me."<sup>18</sup> In so doing, He literally became the servant of us all. Through Jesus Christ and the power we receive through His Atonement, we can also serve. He will help us.<sup>19</sup>

I extend my heartfelt love to those of you who may not currently be able to serve in the Church in traditional ways because of personal circumstances but who live your life in a spirit of service. I pray that you will be blessed in your efforts. I also express appreciation to those who magnify callings week in and week out, as well as those who soon will be accepting calls to serve. All contributions and sacrifices are valued, especially by Him whom we serve. All who serve will receive God's grace.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever our age or circumstance, let service be our "watchcry."<sup>21</sup> Serve in your calling. Serve a mission. Serve your mother. Serve a stranger. Serve your neighbor. Just serve.

May the Lord bless each of us in our efforts to serve and become true followers of Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup> I testify that He lives and directs this work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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