

They Didn't Wait for Me to Ask

*In my time of greatest need,
my ward family taught me
the meaning of service
and love.*

By C. Angel Smith

I was baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when I was 50 years old. Before then, I had been involved in service in my previous church. Following my baptism, I welcomed the opportunity to reach out to others through my new Church callings. Often when I helped a sister in the ward, she would thank me and tell me how much it meant to her. I'd brush it off, reassuring her that "it was nothing." Little did I know that one day I would learn how much such service truly means.

This happened when my husband, Phil, and I were told by a doctor that Phil had lung cancer and only a 25 percent chance





SELFLESS SERVICE

"No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellow man. Service to others is akin to duty, the fulfillment of which brings true joy. We do not live alone—in our city, our nation, or our world. There is no dividing line between our prosperity and our neighbor's wretchedness. 'Love thy neighbor' is more than a divine truth. It is a pattern for perfection."

President Thomas S. Monson, "The Joy of Service," *New Era*, Oct. 2009, 4.



I didn't know how to ask for help. I knew only how to give, not receive.

of survival. From that point on, our lives changed—they became filled with rounds of doctors and hospitals, chemo and radiation.

We struggled to figure out how to fight the cancer and how to pay for it. The expenses of the treatments overwhelmed us; we were already consumed with pain and worry. To make things worse, I found out quickly that I didn't know how to ask for the help needed. I knew only how to give, not receive.

But during that time I was blessed to receive more love than I knew existed from the members of our ward along with the love and support we received from my family. My ward members didn't wait for me to ask for help but rather stepped in and served when they heard about Phil's cancer. When we needed gas money to go to the doctor every day, it was there. When Phil needed special foods, they were provided. When we had to travel out of town to another hospital, anonymous friends provided us with the means.

I also received emotional support and advice. On days I didn't think I could go on another minute, a sister from my ward or stake would call to tell me she loved me and to remind me the Lord loved me also. These phone calls gave me the strength to hold on a little longer.

One of the families in my ward had lost a daughter to bone cancer the year before and recommended things to do, questions to ask, and places to stay when we were out of town for treatments. Their advice was priceless as it gave us a direction to go and greatly helped us as we struggled to know how to deal with this unfamiliar trial.

Another sister, a nurse, would come over to check on Phil. She'd tell me how to help him stay as healthy as he could so treatments would be easier for him. She also reminded me to take good care of myself so I could better help him. This was hard to do when all I could think about was Phil's health.

One family in our previous ward even let us move in with them for eight months after we sold our home to help pay for the hospital expenses. The outpouring of love we felt from each ward was incredible. It would be impossible to list all the people who blessed our lives during that time, but we will never forget them.

After a long battle, Phil is now cancer-free. In the years since then, our family has faced other trials, including my diagnosis with breast cancer. In those trials the members of our ward have stood by our side in support and love. This love may seem small to those who give it, but to me, my husband, and my family, these unsolicited acts were monumental and have given us a deeper understanding of the meaning of love and service. ■