



BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

By Toni Thomas

During the Savior's ministry, He commanded His disciples to "love one another; as I have loved you" (John 13:34). As we follow this commandment, we more fully become disciples of Him who, loving us more than Himself, bore the sins of all. And yet, the lesson that the Savior taught was twofold: not only must we love and serve as He did, but we must also be willing to accept love and service.

This is a lesson that I have had to learn firsthand. When I was 21, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, which aggressively attacked nearly every joint in my body. Since the age of 30, I have used an electric wheelchair for mobility and have had to find creative solutions to meet my needs and those of my family, including our three children. Many of these solutions have involved help from friends and family, who have proven to be true disciples of the Savior. And yet as I received service, I also sought for ways that I could serve others.

One year I discovered that one of my son's fourth-grade classmates had a mother who was blind. Linda and I soon became friends. One day Linda was lamenting the difficulty of getting out to buy groceries, when we hit on a marvelous plan.

The next time I went to the store, I dropped by Linda's house and we journeyed to the store together, her hand resting on the arm of my wheelchair and her cane tapping on the sidewalk ahead of her. Once at the store, we went to work.

"I need some strawberry yogurt," said Linda.

"That's right in front of you," I directed her. "No, a little more to the left. There, now reach straight back. No, that's blueberry! A little more to the left. There, that's it."

Using my sight and Linda's ability to reach things on the shelves, we were able to buy what we needed. She then followed me home and helped me put things away before I went back with her to her own house. Part of



Often the greatest service we can give others is to allow them to serve us.

the fun of the adventure was knowing what a curious sight we must have been to the other shoppers!

I grew to love Linda as I served her; I'm sure she felt the same as she served me. We would never have known that level of caring if we had allowed pride or supposed dignity to interfere with our service. Often the greatest service we can give others is to allow them to serve us.

Everyone can serve. Likewise everyone needs something that he or she cannot provide alone. There are times when we can serve but also times when we must allow others the opportunity to serve us. This marvelous plan, created by a wise and loving Heavenly Father, allows for both personal growth and succor during times of need. This plan is foiled, however, when God's children either fail to serve or fail to accept service.

The Father's plan for us helps us to grow in love and unity. The covenant of baptism

does not require that we bear *others'* burdens but rather that we bear *one another's* burdens—that we help others carry their loads and accept help in carrying our own, both of which are important to our growth (see Mosiah 18:8–10).

Most people don't have to deal with such obvious disabilities as blindness or physical impairments. Often challenges are unseen, such as loneliness, grief, ignorance, despair, depression, or feelings of inadequacy. But whether they are seen or unseen, the Lord knows our burdens and wants to lift them: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Often these burdens are lifted by human hands on His behalf; they are lifted by being shared. ■

The author lives in California, USA.



WE ARE ALL BROTHERS AND SISTERS

"We cannot truly love God if we do not love our fellow travelers on this mortal journey. . . . We are all spirit children of our Heavenly Father and, as such, are brothers and sisters. As we keep this truth in mind, loving all of God's children will become easier. . . .

"Every day of our lives we are given opportunities to show love and kindness to those around us. . . .

"Love is expressed in many recognizable ways: a smile, a wave, a kind comment, a compliment. Other expressions may be more subtle, such as showing interest in another's activities, teaching a principle with kindness and patience, visiting one who is ill or homebound. These words and actions and many others can communicate love."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Love—the Essence of the Gospel," *Ensign*, May 2014, 91, 92, 93.