

STRENGTHENED THROUGH SERVICE

*Service can
bless your life
in more ways
than you
may realize.*



By Brittany Beattie
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It's Wednesday night, and the youth of one eastern-Utah ward have gathered for Mutual. But you probably won't find them in the church building or at a leader's home. You'll more likely see them at a neighbor's house, repairing the roof or chopping wood.

They've discovered the meaning behind the message in Matthew 16:24–25, that our lives become the best they can be only as we serve others. That's exactly what these youth are doing—not just on Mutual nights, but throughout the week as well. And they see their lives changing because of it.

Serving the Community

For example, consider the young men. Hauling 50-pound bales of hay may seem like a lot of work, but these young men prefer this type of service activity for their Mutual nights. In fact, nearly all of their recent Mutual activities have been spent serving their neighbors and community, from moving furniture to filling sandbags and making hygiene kits. The young men have discovered as quorums how to assist the bishop in “administering . . . temporal things” (D&C 107:68) to meet the needs of the people in their community—a main part of fulfilling their duty to God. And they each enjoy it for different reasons.

One main reason is seeing the joy their service brings to others. Seth A. likes how service “helps make other people's lives easier.” Justin J. points out that what may seem small to you may be huge for others: “You do something that you think is so simple, but that person was having a hard time that week or was stressed out, and that one simple thing you did makes things so much better for him or her.”

Another benefit of service-oriented Mutual activities is that they strengthen the priesthood



quorums. “Instead of worrying about ourselves and thinking what the quorum will do to make itself better,” says Zach S., “we do service—and that in itself makes our quorum better.” Brontae H. says, “Doing service together lets us see how other quorum members react to different things. So we know their strengths and weaknesses, and we can learn what we need to do for them.” The same lessons hold true with what they learn about themselves. As



President Henry B. Eyring taught: “When we join hands to serve people in need, the Lord unites our hearts” (“Opportunities to Do Good,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 25).

Serving in the Temple

The youth of this ward also make sure to serve those in the spirit world. Once a week, both the young men and the young women wake up as early as 4:30 a.m. to go to the temple (sometimes traveling in below-freezing temperatures) to do baptisms and confirmations for the dead before school. It's a tradition that started with the Laurels and priests but has now extended to more youth in the ward. In the first half of the year, the ward has already performed temple work for 4,000–5,000 people. And it was all in response to President Thomas S. Monson's conference message that challenged youth to attend the temple regularly. (See “The Holy Temple—a



Beacon to the World," *Ensign*, May 2011, 93.)

Tucker S. says, "I know those people don't have the opportunity to do their temple work, so they need us to do it." And Emily W. reminds us that we have a special role to play in this work: "It's a service project for those who can't help themselves, and there aren't that many people in the world who can do this project."

Serving in the temple has blessed both those whose work is being done and the youth themselves. Tyler M. has noticed how it gives him strength throughout his day. "When you go to the temple in the morning, you realize what's important. You don't get all of this stuff thrown at you right off. You get to focus on what's really important first. And then when you're already focused on the Spirit and the gospel, everything else for the rest of the day just falls into place."



Cairo N. says, "This year my testimony has grown a lot more. Before, I just would think, 'I believe this because that's what my parents believe.' Now I'm starting to build a testimony of my own because I'm going to the temple and I'm starting to understand how it feels to be in the kingdom of God."

Michelle S. says that attending the temple has helped her "start to see the bigger picture of what I want for my life. I say, 'Temple marriage or no marriage.'"

Most youth have found that temple attendance has helped them in temporal ways in addition to the spiritual blessings. Seth says, "My everyday life changed in the most dramatic ways. My grades went up and my athletic performance changed. I could discern more. I could understand people's feelings and my own feelings better."



What Will You Do?

Not all communities will have access to the same service projects, so talk with your parents and leaders to decide what kinds of service activities work for you.

Making Time to Serve

It's not always easy to get to the temple regularly, but these youth think it's worth the sacrifice. Dallin S. says, "When you're tired, you just want to sleep in because you think that will give you the energy you need. But going to the temple makes it so you have much more energy and everything is so much better in your life."

Even if some youth can't participate in the morning because of extracurricular activities, they still look for ways to go to the temple. "There's always time," says Emily. "Even when I was on drill team and couldn't go in the morning, there would be other wards going after school or later at night or even on Saturdays, and so I'd be able to go with them."

Jalysa M. reminds us, "It's totally worth it in the end. When you look back, these are the experiences that mean more than whatever you're missing. The temple is way more important than those other things."

Serving the Lord

As these youth talk about their service activities, their love for service and the way they are drawing nearer to the Lord is clear in their words and expressions.

Michelle says, "I have learned to love those we are serving, and my testimony has grown like never before. I can tell a difference in the way I interact with others." Cairo adds, "There's a great feeling of the Spirit to help you make good choices. It helps me to be more like Christ."

The more they serve, the more these youth want to continue to serve. Amanda C. says, "Every time [we serve], I realize the importance of each of us. I feel more love for my fellow brothers and sisters. I feel excitement to do what God wants me to do—excitement to serve Him."

When asked if he would encourage other youth groups to focus on service activities for Mutual nights and temple attendance, Brontae answered, "Definitely. The biggest reason I would encourage them to do so is because of what King Benjamin taught in Mosiah 2:17, that when we're 'in the service of [our] fellow beings [we] are only in the service of [our] God.' So when we're helping others, we're really helping God accomplish the work He has for us." **NE**



BLESSINGS FROM TEMPLE SERVICE

Here are just some of the ways these youth say their lives have

been blessed by attending the temple regularly:

- I feel the Spirit, have a clear mind, and know what I need to do.
- I feel calm and relaxed, and I have a warm feeling.
- It strengthens everything, like my testimony. And it helps me with my struggles in school.
- I feel a lot of happiness, the Spirit, and joy.
- It makes me want to befriend everybody.
- My interactions with other people go better.
- It's a lot easier to overcome the temptations of the world.
- I have better decision making and a better quality in my day.
- The worries of the world go away.
- I feel extra energy, and I'm excited for the day's work.
- It helps me stay away from certain friends who aren't the kind of people I want to be around.
- I stopped cussing. It's affected simple choices.
- I make better choices, and I'm just a better person.
- I'm more willing to put effort into family matters.
- I feel closer to God.
- I have a sense of clarity in my life and in my classes.
- I have a greater desire to read my scriptures. It is definitely a refueling of the Spirit.
- I feel really good about myself, and I have a better attitude about things.

