

By Sally Johnson Odekirk

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*Service is not a one-way street;  
it blesses both the receiver and  
the giver.*

### BE ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED

“Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

“For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.”

D&C 58:27–28.

Mowing a neighbor’s lawn, spending time listening to someone who is lonely, lighting up a child’s face with a simple gift. These are examples of service that lift the burdens of others. And to those who offer such service come unexpected and important lessons that also brighten their lives.

### Learning Gratitude from Service

John Weir goes to an international school and had the opportunity to do humanitarian service in both Tanzania and Nepal. He feels that he gained as much as he gave from his efforts to help others.

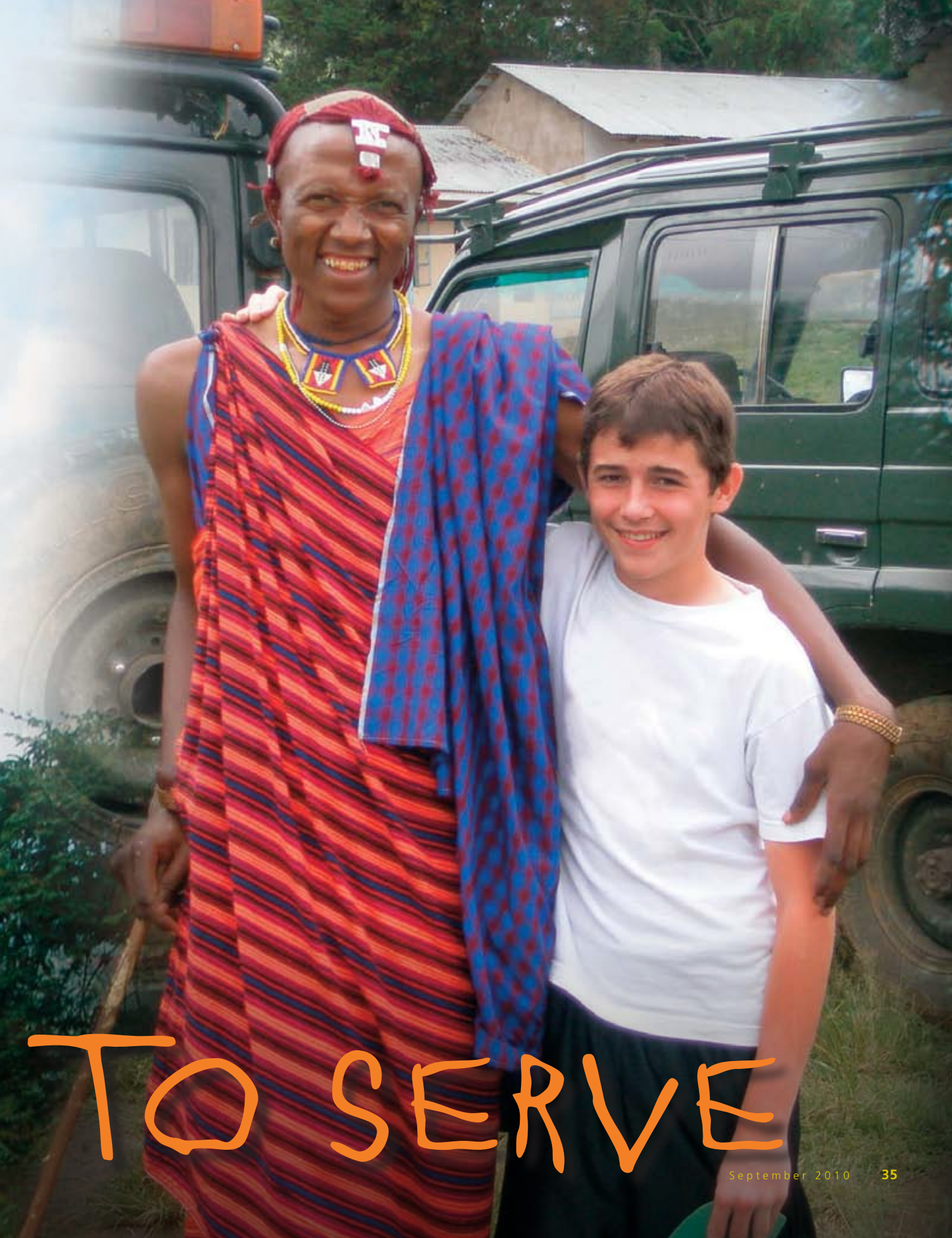
He went to these countries thinking he would see only death, pain, and misery. He says, “I was completely wrong. The people of Tanzania were the most joyful and loving people I have ever met. They were so grateful for everything they had and were always looking out for each other no matter what the conditions were. I had never seen so much joy in someone’s eyes when they received a pencil or a journal from their teachers. I was amazed that something so simple and common in my eyes could be so treasured in someone else’s. I was happy that I could be one of the people who brought them joy.



“The following year I was excited to serve in a children’s hospital in Nepal. The hospital in the mountains of Nepal was a beautiful place except for the injured children with missing limbs and no family. I wanted to turn these children’s frowns upside down. As we talked and played games with them, I discovered that they were strong-willed, fun, and intelligent. This was a surprise to me, because in their circumstances they could be crying every day and looking at the bad things in life. Instead, they did the exact opposite. They were optimistic and tried their hardest to learn and to find enjoyment in life. This taught me to look at the good in life and not dwell on the bad.”

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF JOHN WEIR

# LEARNING



# TO SERVE



## WHY SERVE?

The Savior set the example of service when He was on earth, and He beckons us to follow Him. He knows that as we serve each other, we become more like Him and can experience joy. He taught: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

Prophets have also given wise counsel and shown us the way:

“What is our greatest potential? Is it not to be Christlike ourselves? And what are the qualities we must develop to achieve such greatness? We might consider intelligence, light, knowledge, and leadership. But perhaps the most essential godlike quality is that of compassion and love—compassion shown forth in the service to others, unselfishness, that ultimate expression of concern for others we call love. Wherever our Father’s children magnify their opportunities for loving service, they are learning to become more like Him” (President Spencer W. Kimball [1895–1985], “President Kimball Speaks Out on Service to Others,” *New Era*, Mar. 1981, 47).

## Learning to Serve with Love

Brad Sorensen of the Rose Park Seventh Ward in the Salt Lake Rose Park North Stake learned important lessons about service when he was growing up. His elderly neighbor,

Sister Sparks, had some health problems, and whenever she worked in her yard, his mother noticed and persuaded him to go over and help. At first he didn’t understand why he had to stop what he was doing to go help his neighbor.

“During those years I spent helping Sister Sparks, I learned that there are two different ways to serve others. The first way was when I felt forced, or compelled, to serve. I learned that this is not a good way to serve. Maybe you say, ‘I’ll do it as fast as I can so I can come back and watch TV.’

But the love for the person you are serving is not present. There is no joy in this kind of service. This is how I was at first.”

But then Brad learned about serving with love. “It came to the point that I would go to her house every week and mow her lawn without being asked. I know this was a big help to her, but it was a big help to me, also.

“I found this to be a much more satisfying way to serve. Serving with love is pure, whole-hearted, and full of unselfish concern for the person you are helping. The feeling of accomplishment and love for the person you served cannot be found in any other way. It is an all-around good feeling.

“My acts of service were nothing big, but they were done with love. If you do an act of service with love for the person you are doing it for, you will be much more satisfied with the results. I learned that it doesn’t matter how big or small a service project is; it is still important.”





## Learning to Serve Unselfishly

Sister Lee Vashti, Ma On Shan Ward, Hong Kong Tolo Harbour Stake, learned a similar lesson when the young men and young women in the Hong Kong stakes and their parents gathered to assemble gift packages for elderly single residents of the city. Then they separated into small groups to clean the apartments of the elderly and to spend some time talking with those who live alone and typically have few, if any, visitors.

Lee says, "I felt slightly put off when I first realized that I was assigned to clean someone's apartment in the unbearably hot and humid Hong Kong weather. What's more, I was working with another ward's youth who were almost total strangers to me. Only now do I realize that this service activity was about helping others and not about spending a morning with friends."

As she helped clean the apartment and spent some time visiting, she gained firsthand knowledge of how important it is to give time and attention to someone who appreciates the chance to visit.

She says, "The senior's house was well organized, and everything had its own place in the small apartment: a long bench off to the side of the wall with a small TV right across from it and a bunk bed in

the corner of the room. There wasn't much for my group to do, but we still wiped the top of the walls and the lights, and visited with our senior friend. I gained a valuable lesson about my attitude. This was not about me. This was about forgetting my wants and going to help another. Once I understood this simple concept, I realized that I had had fun—even without my friends. Not only had I given service to someone, but I also had made new friends." **NE**

### **NEMore**

For more on service, see "On the Way to a Miracle," Mary Ellen Edmunds, *New Era*, Mar. 1988, 12.

**F**rom their service experiences, Brad, Lee, and John each learned valuable lessons about love, reaching out to others, and gratitude. Brad explains the importance of what they learned when he says, "The smallest service is still meaningful to those who receive it, especially when it's given with love."



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