

HANDLING CRITICISM IN OUR CALLINGS

Name withheld

An interesting blessing and challenge about a lay church is that we have to be patient with each other and ourselves as we learn and grow in our callings. When a difficult and sensitive situation—one that involved several ward members—came up in my calling, I handled it the best I knew how and moved on, believing the difficult experience was behind me.

I was wrong. Not everyone in our ward agreed about how the incident should have been handled, and it became a point of great discussion. Some agreed with what I had done. Others thought I'd made a significant blunder. I felt bad, but since I had done my best, I tried not to worry too much about it.

When I was released a short time later, however, it came as a tremendous blow. I knew that callings in the Church are only temporary, of course, but because of the timing, I felt as though my leaders were blaming or punishing me for what had happened.

The scrutiny seemed more intense than ever, and I wasn't sure I wanted to face anyone in the ward right away. So the week following my release, I stayed home from church. I did so

again the next week—and the next. The longer I stayed away, the more difficult it seemed to return.

After some time, I started thinking about what had happened. I realized that even though this was a painful situation, it wasn't worth putting my covenants on the line. Was the Church true or wasn't it?

Maybe I had handled the situation in my calling appropriately; maybe I hadn't. The truth is all of us are learning, and all of us make mistakes.

As painful as it was to admit, maybe who was right or wrong didn't really matter in the grand scheme. What *would* matter, though, was whether I kept my covenants. It would matter—both to my family and me—if I was attending church, renewing my covenants in sacrament meeting, and continuing to serve. And it would matter how I responded to priesthood authority.

I returned to church. A short time later I received another calling. That calling—and callings since—required that I serve with some of the people who had criticized my actions. That has been difficult. But I am glad I haven't let their comments stop me from enjoying the blessings of Church activity. ■



GIVING EACH OTHER THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

“Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don't judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone's differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn't handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of another's weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other.”

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 19.