

SERVING THE ONE

By Al VanLeeuwen

When I started my freshman year of college, I quickly formed friendships with two other freshmen, one a rancher and the other a farmer. We made an unlikely threesome—two down-to-earth western US country boys and one fast-talking East Coast city slicker. After graduating from college, they returned home to ranch and farm, and I entered the corporate business world.

Annual Christmas cards and occasional phone calls kept us up to date as our lives advanced. By the time I was in my mid-30s, I had served twice as Scoutmaster. Later, as I finished my second “tour” as an assistant nursery leader, my two friends were serving in bishoprics. As time progressed, I fell into the trap of comparing my callings to my friends’ callings, and I began to feel unwanted and ignored.

By the time I was in my mid-40s, leadership callings extended to others would trouble my thoughts for days. Each time someone was called to a ward or stake leadership position, Satan would whisper to me that I was unworthy or lacked the faith necessary for such callings. I could intellectually fight off such thoughts through prayer and study, but I still struggled with my self-worth. Being “just an elder” and refereeing youth basketball games at age 50 while my friends were serving in stake presidencies was not what I had envisioned I would be doing at that age.

Then came an experience that changed my understanding of the gospel. I was assisting my



wife one Sunday with her Primary class full of energetic seven-year-olds. As Primary sharing time started, I noticed one of the class members huddled on her chair and obviously not feeling well. The Spirit whispered to me that she needed comfort, so I sat by her and quietly asked what was wrong. She didn’t answer but seemed to be in real distress, so I began to sing softly to her.

The Primary was learning a new song, and when we sang, “If I listen with my heart I hear the Savior’s voice,”¹ I began to feel the most incredible light and warmth fill my soul. I felt wrapped in eternal arms of love. I understood that Heavenly Father had heard this young girl’s prayer and that I was there to provide the comfort He wanted to give her. My spiritual understanding was opened, and I received a personal testimony of our Savior’s love for her, for each of His children, and for me. I knew He trusted me to serve someone in need, and I was where He wanted me to be. I learned that we are His hands when we serve the one.

I rejoice in any opportunity to serve, and I try to remain worthy to feel the promptings of the Spirit and to be where Heavenly Father wants me to be when one of His children needs service. ■

NOTE

1. Sally DeFord, “If I Listen with My Heart,” *2011 Outline for Sharing Time*, 28.



HOW MANY PEOPLE DID YOU HELP?

“Perhaps when we face our Maker, we will not be asked, ‘How many positions did you hold?’ but rather, ‘How many people did you help?’ In reality, you can never love the Lord until you serve him by serving his people.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Faces and Attitudes,” *New Era*, Sept. 1977, 50.