

These Latter-day Saints have learned that serving with all their heart, might, mind, and strength isn't limited by age or ability.

SERVICE

NEVER GROWS OLD

When Glenna Smith of Utah, USA, waited outside her bishop's office, she wasn't sure what to expect. All she knew was that she was getting a calling. She thought maybe she would be asked to help in the nursery, and that was fine with her, as long as she had a chair to sit on while watching the children. She was 74 years old, after all.

So when her bishop called her to be the Laurel adviser, she was stunned. Sister Smith stared at the bishop. "Do you know how old I am?" she asked.

Sister Smith remembers, "I was surprised because I knew what the calling would entail. My bishop told me that he knew I had some physical problems and that I could do what I felt comfortable with as far as attending activities. My main responsibility would be the Sunday lesson."

Sister Smith felt overwhelmed, but she accepted the call.

"I felt like I had a purpose," she says, "that I wasn't too old to do something important, and I know how important this calling is. These

youth have a battle ahead of them. If I can touch one and help her be more Christlike, then I will do my best."

She has been able to cultivate strong friendships with the Laurels she serves.

"If they need me to do anything for them, they ask," explains Sister Smith. "They feel comfortable coming to me with problems, and I feel a closeness with these girls that is nice at my age. I know how precious they are."

As people reach their senior years, some feel that they have no more to contribute; but the Lord sees their potential to do good. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught: "The Lord knows and loves the elderly among His people. It has always been so, and upon them He has bestowed many of His greatest responsibilities. . . . [I] hope your days are filled with things to do and ways in which you can render service to others."¹

Many older Latter-day Saints, like Sister Smith, have learned that the limitations that come with age may restrict *how* they can serve but not how *well* they can serve—or how much their service is needed.





Relying on the Lord

After Sister Smith was called to teach the Laurels, she studied *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* to learn how to fulfill her calling. She decided that she wanted to complete the Personal Progress program herself, so she found a project she wanted to try—memorizing “The Living Christ.”²

“When you get my age you don’t retain things like the Laurels do,” Sister Smith explains. “I went to my Heavenly Father and said, ‘I can’t do this alone, but I can with Thy help.’”

She memorized one paragraph each week, one sentence at a time. As she relied on the Lord, she was able to memorize the entire document.

The other Young Women leaders in her ward challenged the young women to follow Sister Smith’s example by memorizing “The Living Christ.” Soon stake leaders heard about her project and challenged all the young women in the stake to do the same.

“We say, ‘I can’t do this, I can’t do that,’” says Sister Smith. “But the truth is that we can do anything in righteousness. When we put ourselves down, we are not accepting the Atonement. We are so special to God. He will help us.”

Doing What No Computer Can

For 20 years, Herbert Schory and his wife, Margaret, worked together to submit thousands of names for temple work. Sister Schory passed away in 2000, but Brother Schory, now in his 80s, continues to move forward in the work they started together.

Brother Schory, who lives in Nevada, USA, spends

hours each day transcribing names from digital images of original records as part of the FamilySearch indexing program, often in languages such as French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

“It is exciting to help people do things they can’t do for themselves,” Brother Schory explains. “That is the whole idea—people who have passed away can have ordinances performed for them. They can progress. Knowing that is enough to keep me going.”

Brother Schory enjoys teaching others how to get started and helping them learn to love indexing as much as he does.

“Age is no handicap,” he says. “The only requirement for indexing is good eyesight. I’ve seen people with tired and crippled hands type in information. Anyone can serve if they want to.”

Developing a Missionary Spirit

When the missionaries challenged ward members to invite a friend to hear the gospel in their home, Natalie Hazard of Pennsylvania, USA, didn’t hesitate to accept that challenge. She picked a date and prayed that the Lord would help her find someone to invite.

Sister Hazard, who is in her 80s, soon noticed that she hadn’t seen the couple who lived across the street recently, so she decided to stop by. As she stood on their porch, she realized that she had found her opportunity to invite someone to meet the missionaries. The couple accepted.

Sister Hazard finds that one of the best ways she can serve is to be obedient by fulfilling her assignments, bearing her testimony, attending the temple, and especially sharing the gospel. For her, the challenge to share the gospel is more than just a way to serve.

“I want people to know about the gospel,” she explains. “I have had a missionary spirit since I joined the Church as a young woman. I’m not always successful, but I keep trying because I love my Savior. I want to be His disciple.”

Finding a Way to Serve

Sister Gale Ward’s husband, Burt, passed away several years ago in a car accident. Serving has helped Sister Ward

cope with the unexpected grief and loneliness. A few months after Burt's death, Sister Ward started working in the Newport Beach California Temple. While she enjoyed her service there, she felt there was something more she needed to do.

"I kept searching for another way the Lord wanted me to serve, but I couldn't find it," says Sister Ward, who is in her 70s. "I thought about serving a full-time mission, but I didn't want to go without my husband. We were a companionship, and I couldn't serve without him."

While many older single sisters do find joy in full-time missions, Sister Ward felt that she needed to serve in a different way. She found it in a part-time service mission at the local LDS employment resource center. Sister Ward now serves there twice a week in addition to serving in the temple and in her calling as a Relief Society teacher.

"I do office work, make appointments, enter information, and greet people, and eventually I will be teaching employment classes," says Sister Ward. "I am enjoying my mission, but it has been a difficult adjustment because I hadn't done this kind of work in many years."

Despite the adjustment period, Sister Ward has found her service fulfilling. "You don't have to just sit around and wait for your time to return back to Heavenly Father," she says. "I want to be with Burt, but this is not the time. There are other people who need me."

Focusing on What We Can Do

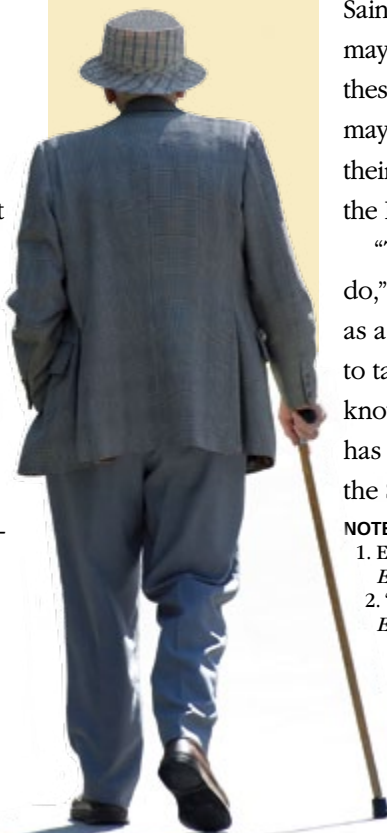
Bernard Phipps of Meriden, England, has decided not to focus on what he can't do because of the limitations that come with



OUR EFFORTS ARE ENOUGH

"Some worry endlessly . . . because age limits what they can do. I do not think it pleases the Lord when we worry because we think we never do enough or that what we do is never good enough."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Least of These," *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 87.



age. Instead he focuses on what he can do. He and his wife, Evelyn, have experienced many difficult health challenges but have been able to serve faithfully in their callings. Sister Phipps has served as visiting teaching coordinator, and Brother Phipps has taught the high priests group. Currently both serve together as Primary teachers.

"Problems may come with age, but there are still things you can do," says Brother Phipps. "If we are able to do something to help, then we do it. We try not to worry about what we can't do. We just keep serving where we can."

Some things the Phippses have found they *can* do are look after their grandchildren, prepare Sunday lessons, and help the children they teach in Primary understand how the scriptures can be meaningful to them.

Like the Phippses, many older Latter-day Saints magnify their callings, whatever they may be, and reach out to serve. In so doing, these faithful Saints discover that while age may bring physical limitations, it does not limit their responsibility to make contributions to the Lord's kingdom.

"There are things our bodies won't let us do," says Sister Smith, who has now served as a Laurel adviser for about a year. "We have to take that into consideration. But we don't know what we can do if we don't try. Age has no bearing on what Heavenly Father and the Savior think of us." ■

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Elderly in the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 4.
2. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2.

Brother Bernard Phipps passed away while this article was being prepared for publication.