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# Enduring Together

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*The ward is organized to minister to the needs of those who face even the most difficult and heartbreaking trials.*



A couple of years ago a humor columnist for a local newspaper wrote on a serious and thought-provoking subject. I quote from this article: “Being a go-to-church Mormon in Utah means living so close to fellow ward members that not much happens that the entire congregation doesn’t know about in five minutes tops.”

He continues: “This kind of cheek-to-jowl living can be intrusive. . . . It also happens to be one of our greatest strengths.”

The author goes on to say: “At work on Tuesday, I caught the noon news broadcast on television. A van had been obliterated in a traffic crash. A young mother and two small children were being rushed to emergency rooms by helicopter and ambulance. . . . Hours later I learned

that the van belonged to the young couple living across the street from me in Herriman, Eric and Jeana Quigley.

“Not only do I see the Quigleys in church, . . . we ate dinner with them at a neighborhood party the night before the crash. Our grandkids played with daughters Bianca and Miranda. . . .

“Fourteen-month-old Miranda suffered serious head injuries and died three days later at Primary Children’s Hospital.

“Here’s where all that nosiness . . . pays off. Although the accident occurred several miles from home, the dust literally had not settled before someone from the ward stopped and was pulling through the wreckage. The rest of the ward knew about it before the cops and paramedics showed up.

“Ward members went to all three hospitals, contacted Eric at work, and organized into labor squads. People who didn’t get in on the immediate-need level were frantic for some way to help.

“In 48 hours, the Quigley yard was mowed, home cleaned, laundry done, refrigerator stocked, relatives fed and a trust fund set up at a local bank. We would have given their dog a bath if they had one.”

The author concludes with this insightful comment: “There is a positive side to the congregational microscope my ward lives under. . . . What



happens to a few happens to all” (Robert Kirby, “Well-Being of Others Is Our Business,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 30, 2005, p. C1).

The compassion and service rendered by caring ward members as a result of this tragic accident are not unique to this particular incident. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma explained to prospective followers of Christ: “As ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort,” then, as Alma explained, they were prepared for baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–9). This scripture lays the foundation for ministering and caring in a most compassionate way.

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trials. The bishop, often considered the “father” of the ward, is there to provide counsel and resources. But also close at hand are Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood leaders, the Relief Society presidency, home teachers, visiting teachers, and the ward members—always the ward members. All are there to administer comfort and show compassion in times of need.

In my own immediate neighborhood we have had our share of heart-wrenching tragedies. In October 1998, 19-year-old Zac Newton, who lived only three houses east of us, was killed in a tragic automobile accident.

Less than two years later, in July, 19-year-old Andrea Richards, who lived directly across from the Newtons, was killed in an automobile accident.

One Saturday afternoon in July 2006, Travis Bastian, a 28-year-old returned missionary, and his 15-year-old sister, Desiree, who lived across

the street and two houses north of us, were killed in a terrible automobile accident.

One month later, in August 2006, 32-year-old Eric Gold, who grew up in the house next door to us, suffered a premature death. And others in this neighborhood have also suffered heart-wrenching experiences privately endured and known only to themselves and God.

With the loss of five young people, one might assume that this is an unusual number of trials for one small neighborhood. I choose to think the number only seems large because of a close, caring ward, whose members know when there is a pressing need. It is a ward with members who are following the admonition of Alma and the Savior—members who care and love and bear one another’s burdens, members who are willing to mourn with those that mourn, members who are willing to comfort those in need of comfort, members who endure together.

In each of these instances we saw an outpouring of love, service, and compassion that was inspirational to all. Bishops arrived, home and visiting teachers went into action, and Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies organized to take care of both spiritual and temporal needs. Refrigerators were stocked, houses cleaned, lawns mowed, shrubs trimmed, fences painted, blessings given, and soft shoulders were available for crying on. Members were everywhere.

In every one of these instances, the families who lost a loved one expressed increased faith, increased love for the Savior, increased gratitude for the Atonement, and heartfelt thankfulness for an organization that responds to the deepest emotional and spiritual needs of its members. These families now speak about how they got to know the Lord through their adversity. They relate many sweet

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experiences that grew out of their pain. They testify that blessings can emerge from heartbreak. They give praise to the Lord and would echo the words of Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

From bearing one another’s burdens as ward members, we have learned several lessons:

1. The Lord’s organization is fully adequate to *know* and *care for* those with even the most dire emotional and spiritual needs.
2. Adversity *can* bring us closer to God, with a renewed and enlightened appreciation for prayer and the Atonement, which covers pain and suffering in all their manifestations.
3. Members who suffer tragedy firsthand often experience an increased capacity for love, compassion, and understanding. They become the first, last, and often the most effective responders in giving comfort and showing compassion to others.
4. A ward, as well as a family, draws closer together as it endures together—what happens to one happens to all.
5. And perhaps most important, we can each be more compassionate and caring because we have each had our own personal trials and experiences to draw from. We can endure together.

I rejoice in belonging to such a loving and caring organization. No one knows better how to bear one another’s burdens, mourn with those who mourn, and comfort those who stand in need of comfort. I choose to call it “enduring together.” What happens to one happens to all. We endure together.

May we be an instrument in lightening the burden of others, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■