
Out of Small Things

ELDER MICHAEL J. TEH

Of the Seventy

As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility to care for and serve our brothers and sisters.



Mabubay from the lovely and wonderful people of the Philippines.

One of the oldest and more profound questions uttered in the history of this earth was, most interestingly, asked by Cain in response to God's inquiry soon after Cain slew his brother Abel: "Am I my brother's keeper?"¹ This question deserves serious contemplation by those seeking to do the will of the Lord. One of the answers is in the teachings of Alma:

"And now, . . . 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."²

As disciples of the Lord Jesus

Christ, we have a responsibility to care for and serve our brothers and sisters. In relating the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus Christ not only confounded His enemies but also taught a great lesson to all who sought to follow Him. We need to enlarge the circle of our influence. Our service to others should be independent of race, color, standing, or relationships. After all, the commandment to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees"³ did not come with qualifications.

Many believe that for service to be meaningful it should consist of having elaborate plans and forming a committee. Although many of these worthwhile projects help, much of the service needed in the world today relates to our day-to-day associations with each other. Often we find these opportunities within the confines of our own home, neighborhood, and ward.

The following advice, given by the deceitful Screwtape to his nephew Wormwood in C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, describes a common malady afflicting many of us today: "Do what you will, there is going to be some benevolence, as well as some malice, in your patient's soul. The great thing is to direct the malice to his immediate neighbours whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he



does not know. The malice thus becomes wholly real and the benevolence largely imaginary.”⁴

The words from a popular hymn prescribe the perfect remedy:

*Has anyone’s burden been lighter
today
Because I was willing to share?
Have the sick and the weary been*

*helped on their way?
When they needed my help was I
there?
Then wake up and do something
more
Than dream of your mansion
above.
Doing good is a pleasure, a joy
beyond measure,
A blessing of duty and love.*⁵

The following are events that I have been privileged to witness that have taught me how simple acts of service can help us and those we are permitted to influence. Our Heavenly Father places loving individuals on important crossroads to help us so that we are not left alone to grope in the dark. These men and women help by example and with patience and love. Such has been my experience.

I recall a particularly important crossroad—the decision to go on a full-time mission. I stood on that crossroad for a very, very long time. As I struggled to decide which road to take, my family, friends, and priesthood leaders came forward to take my hand. They encouraged and challenged me and offered countless prayers on my behalf. My full-time missionary sister wrote to me regularly and never gave up.

Even today, I am still carried on the shoulders of good men and women. I suspect that we all are. To some degree we all depend on each other to be able to make it back to our heavenly home.

Sharing the gospel message is one of the most rewarding ways we can render service to those who are not of our faith. I recall a childhood experience with someone I will simply call Uncle Fred.

When I was six years old, Uncle Fred was my worst nightmare. He was our neighbor, and he was always drunk. One of his favorite pastimes was to throw rocks at our home.

Because my mother was a great cook, single adult members from our small branch frequented our home. One day when Uncle Fred was sober, these members befriended him and invited him into our home. This development terrified me. He was no longer just outside but inside our home. This happened a few more times until, finally, they were able to convince Uncle Fred to listen to the missionaries. He accepted the gospel

and was baptized. He served a full-time mission, returned with honor, pursued further education, and was married in the temple. He is now a righteous husband, father, and priesthood leader. Watching Uncle Fred today, one would find it difficult to believe that he once brought nightmares into the life of a six-year-old boy. May we always be perceptive to opportunities to share the gospel.

My mother was a great example of helping others by giving them a boost. She taught us many important lessons. The one lesson that has had the most lasting effect on my life was her desire to help anyone in need who visited our home. It bothered me to see many of them leave with our food, our clothing, and even our money. Because I was young and we were poor, I did not like what I saw. How could she give to others when our family did not even have enough? Was it wrong to attend to our needs first? Didn't we deserve a more comfortable life?

For years I struggled with these questions. Much later in life, I finally realized what Mother was teaching. Even as she struggled with the effects of a crippling disease, she could not stop giving to those in need.

“Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”⁶ Serving others need not come from spectacular events. Often it is the simple daily act that gives comfort, uplifts, encourages, sustains, and brings a smile to others.

May we always find opportunities to serve is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Genesis 4:9; Moses 5:34.
2. Mosiah 18:8–9.
3. D&C 81:5.
4. *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (2002), 201.
5. “Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, no. 223.
6. D&C 64:33.