

By Christina H. Fairweather



TUTORED

When I was attending college, I noticed two very different beginning piano classes listed in the course catalog. The first, “Group Piano Instruction,” featured row upon row of electronic keyboards where students wearing headphones all practiced the same song from the same book and received grades based on their ability to perform at a predetermined level.

By contrast, “Private Piano Instruction” was a class of one. Here a teacher worked individually with one student to correct blunders and hone technique. Even though the teacher often had many students, each one received individualized instruction and assignments based on the student’s needs. The final grade was based on individual progress, not on how well the student did compared to the group. There was a catch, however: private lessons

I felt overwhelmed as a new Primary president, but then I realized the Lord had unique lessons to teach me.

required a fee above the basic tuition.

I once overheard two students comparing these classes. “I can either take group instruction or private lessons for beginning piano,” one said, “but there is a fee for private lessons. If it’s just beginning piano, it probably doesn’t make much difference which one I take, so why pay the fee?”

At the time, I attached little significance to this conversation, but years later, when I was called to be Primary president of my ward, this curious memory would come back. Like many who receive new callings, I doubted my ability to meet the looming challenges and felt overwhelmed by all of my new responsibilities. Surely I lacked the qualifications that had made all the other Primary presidents successful! Would I be capable of

was. Listening to another, I noticed that her responses were more creative. Nervously I glanced up at the teacher, wondering if I would get in trouble for not doing as well as the others. “Sorry, you’re falling behind,” I could imagine the teacher saying. “You’ll never become a real Primary president.”

As I began serving in my new calling, I quickly realized how terribly wrong this idea of group instruction was. Accepting a calling was more like enrolling in private lessons—with the Lord. Knowing both our strengths and weaknesses, He places us in situations where our unique gifts are needed to bless a ward member, a class, even a Primary. Although the former Primary president may have just finished performing a concerto, the Lord knows when it’s time for my simple sonata. Through our callings, He gives us the experiences we need to become more like Him. Whether teacher, secretary, or president, callings throughout our lives are part of the individual curriculum the Lord develops for our progress.

There is, of course, a fee for these precious lessons. We pay with the time we spend in seeking the Lord’s direction and diligently fulfilling our callings. We pay with the patience we extend, both to those we serve and those with whom we serve. We pay with the faith we demonstrate when we’re plunged into situations we didn’t ask for or anticipate. But no matter how great the fee extracted from us, it does not begin to compensate for the glorious privilege of participating in the music the Lord orchestrates to bless people’s lives.

The Lord is our Master Teacher. He knows when and where He wants us to serve in His Church. He also knows us completely and loves us infinitely. As we accept callings to build His Church and serve others “unto the end” (see D&C 10:4), we offer ourselves as willing students, and, privately, He teaches us to become more like Him. ■

The author lives in New York, USA.

doing everything expected of me? Would my efforts be acceptable to the ward members and to the Lord? Would I do the job as well as the past presidents? As I wrestled with these questions, I remembered that long-ago conversation about the choice between group lessons and private piano lessons.

I had assumed that accepting my new calling was like joining a group piano lesson with all of the other women called to be Primary presidents. In my mind, we all sat in rows with copies of a manual, *How to Be a Primary President*, in front of us. The teacher assigned lessons like “Conducting Sharing Time” or “Preparing Eight-Year-Olds for Baptism,” and we all started studying and practicing the appropriate things to say and do. Watching one Primary president, I could see she was working faster than I

BY THE LORD