



By Elder  
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Of the Seventy

# YOUR Journey of Giving

**Y**ears ago some of my associates and I began partnerships that extended loans to impoverished people in India. One of the first women we loaned money to built a small, successful business. We asked her what she was going to do with her newfound profits. She told us, “I am going to buy my son back from slavery.”

I have never forgotten her words. Out of desperation for food, her family had sold their son into indentured servitude. The harsh reality of our world is that many people live without what many of us take for granted: electricity, education, employment, clean water, sufficient food—let alone the liberating truths of the restored gospel.

Everything we receive in this life is a blessing from a loving Father in Heaven. But with blessings comes responsibility.

When I was 17 years old, my father spoke

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of this challenge to a group of Church members. For dutiful servants, he said, “godly responsibility always precedes individual opportunity. Ours is a choice to see if we will take the talents, the resources, and the blessings God has given us and blaze new paths

to realize His purposes or sit on the sidelines content in our individual successes or failures. . . . In the world of faith, you always stand at this crossroad.”

A fundamental question you should consider is this: “What am I going to do with the blessings that have been bestowed upon me?” Will you be like those of the world to whom the prophet Moroni says, “Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life?” (Mormon 8:39). Or will you rise like disciples to whom the Savior says, “Unto whom much is given much is required?” (D&C 82:3). Will you engage or be content on the sidelines? Will you lift others or think only of yourself?

## Everyone Has Something to Give

God invites us to be agents of action and to be anxiously engaged in good causes (see D&C 58:27; 2 Nephi 2:26). It is easy to limit the impact of our love, our influence, and our blessings to only close friends, loved ones, and those of our own choosing, but the Savior asks more of us. “If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?” (Matthew 5:46). Paul added this exclamation point: “[Without] charity, I am nothing.” Charity, he added, “seeketh not her own” (1 Corinthians 13:2, 5). We are to leave our comfort zones and bless those around us, including strangers, those who reject us, and even those who despise us.

Some of you will say, “Who am I? I am no genius. I have no unique talent.

I am nobody special. I just feel fortunate to get through each day.”

To each of you, no matter your fears or uncertainties, I say, “Never sell yourself short!” Today you and I live in a world where good and evil share the stage, but the Lord tells the faithful, “Nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20).

Let this one absolute truth from heaven sink into your mind and heart—you have the power within you to astonish this world. You are a son or daughter of the most powerful Being and force in the universe. You are endowed with His all-knowing light and truth, by which you may forsake all evil (see D&C 93:37). Moreover, the

Lord teaches this profound truth: “To every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God” (D&C 46:11).



### **“Out of Love for Each Other”**

Seated on the podium the day I marched down the aisle in my Harvard graduation robe was Mother Teresa. She rose and delivered one of the most memorable speeches ever given at Harvard—a profound call to service and repentance. She expressed the hope that we graduates, “in going into the world, [would] go with Jesus, [would] work for Jesus, and [would] serve him in the distressing guise of the poor.”<sup>1</sup>

She also shared the following story of a couple she had met just a few days before leaving Calcutta for Harvard:

“A young man and a young woman came to our house with a big amount of money. I asked them, ‘Where did you get this money?’ because I knew that they gave their money to feed the poor. . . . They gave me the most strange answer: ‘Before our wedding we decided not to buy wedding clothes, not to have a wedding feast, but to give you the money to feed the poor.’ Then I asked them one more question: ‘But why, why did you do that?’ That is a scandal in India, not to have a wedding feast and special clothes. And they gave me this most beautiful answer: ‘Out of love for each other, we wanted to give each other something special, and that special something was that big sacrifice, the wonderful something.’”<sup>2</sup>

Here was one of the world’s genuine saints reminding us graduates that everyone—not just some fortunate few in the audience that day but even those in the poorest regions of the world with little to their names—has something to give, if nothing more than sacrifice and pure love for others. Mother Teresa taught us that sacrificing something as simple as new clothing or a meal or a cultural rite of passage could change a life.

I knew then, as I hope you know now, that everyone has something to give. God asks that we act courageously in giving of ourselves and sharing the gifts and blessings He has given us. Take the talents and skills you have developed and go out and be a positive force for and on behalf of our Savior.

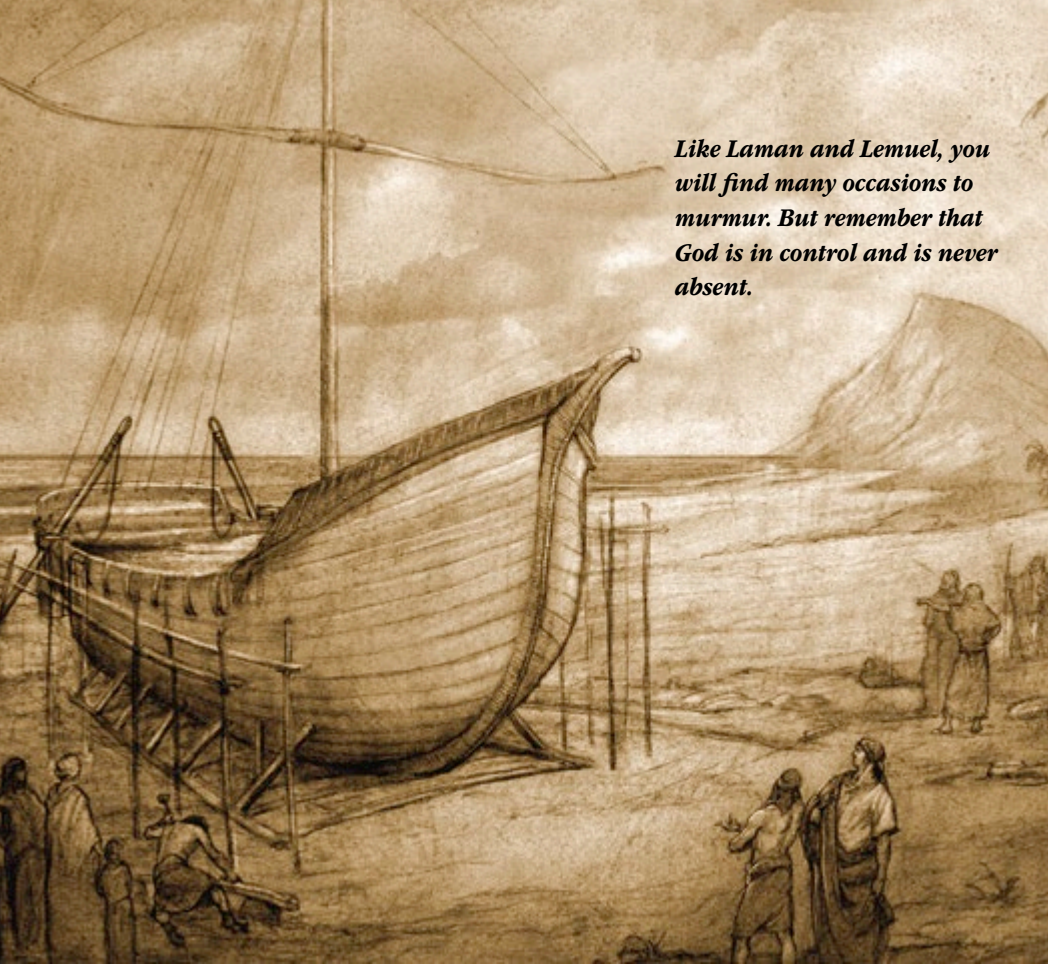
### **Follow the Voice within You**

The First Vision teaches several lessons. First, Joseph Smith learned that he did not need to fear—that in moments of “great alarm,” God delivers rather than forsakes us. The Prophet Joseph learned that heaven knew his name, that the Son lives, and that the Father is a personal, tangible God who answers prayer. Joseph also learned a foundational principle of conduct for our lives—because the world has been corrupted by the “commandments of men,” which have “a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof,” we are to “hear Him!” (See Joseph Smith—History 1:15–19.)

The Holy Ghost can carry us to places and tasks that our mind will not allow. There was never anything rational about the Prophet Joseph building a temple in Kirtland or Nephi building a ship in Bountiful. Reason alone would never travel those paths. But by the voice of the Spirit we can know exactly how, where, and what to give of ourselves.

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***Like Laman and Lemuel, you will find many occasions to murmur. But remember that God is in control and is never absent.***

In the days ahead you will find many occasions to murmur. But remember that God is in control and is never absent. Remember that your call is to work after the manner of the Lord, not after the manner of men, and that by following His voice, you will become a powerful instrument in His hands for doing good.

True success is to accomplish what the Lord sent you to earth to do. Never doubt yourself. You are a child of a loving Father in Heaven. He has given you great blessings that He expects you to

recognize. When you reach a game-changing crossroads, He asks you not to shrink but rather to act with deep faith to revolutionize the world in which you live.

Don't fret at how irrational the voice of the Spirit may seem. God is in control and knows what is necessary and right. Always be guided by the Holy Ghost.

Someone once asked me what is the most important thing I have learned since I became a General Authority. The answer is simple. I now know as never before the constant need to repent—to push forward and do better. My prayer for each of you is that you may likewise conduct your life, ever repenting to draw closer to the Father's voice in order to serve and help family, friends, and others—known or unknown, loved or unloved, wherever God takes you on your journey. ■

*From a commencement address, "Continuing Your Life's Journey," given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on July 23, 2013. For the full address, visit [web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches](http://web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches).*

#### NOTES

1. Mother Teresa, "A Hunger for God" (from a speech given on June 9, 1982), in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*, ed. Kelly Monroe (1996), 318.
2. Mother Teresa, "A Hunger for God," 317.

### Push Forward

Years ago my wife, Lynette, and I traveled from Jerusalem to the eastern shore of Oman along the Frankincense Trail. This is the likely path of Lehi's family. Along the way we journeyed through endless miles of desert that stretched as far as the eye could see. It was a hot, nasty environment. As we came to the shore at Oman, we found a luscious, tropical, bountiful setting that looked out upon an endless ocean.

As I looked across that daunting ocean and thought about the vast, empty desert we had just crossed, I imagined hearing Laman question Nephi: "You're going to build a ship? And you expect us to go with you?"

I find it significant that Nephi wrote the following about himself:

"Now I, Nephi, did not work the timbers after the manner which was learned by men, . . . but I did build [the ship] after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me. . . .

". . . Wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things" (1 Nephi 18:2–3).