

Recently, I had the honor of being one of the speakers at the Temple Grove reunion. I spoke during the Sunday morning service. The theme was "We Gather Together for Strength". As I shared, one of the comments I made is that I am not a people person. I never have been. When I am in a large gathering, I prefer to be at the back, and against the wall. And by large gathering, I mean more than 6 people... I have never been comfortable around others, and frankly, just don't care for people in general. People are rude, they can be mean, and they generally only care about themselves. You can just imagine what my high school experience was like... While sharing, I gave the example of the old saying with respect to mobs. "A person is smart, but people are stupid." A bit of a harsh statement, but there is truth in it. In my younger days, I had dreamed of one day being able to have a cabin in the middle of nowhere. Away from everyone and finding happiness by myself. Eventually I met my wife, and we now have three wonderful children. I can't imagine life without them. My son, the oldest, will be getting married this fall, and the family will once again be growing. I am excited at the prospect of a home full of family at Christmas, and any other occasions we can be together.

I was raised in the RLDS church...sort of... I can recall attending on a handful of occasions when I was younger. When I was in high school, my parents decided in earnest, to attend church and we regularly attended services. By this time, the split had hit Lima, and we were attending the local restoration branch. I was finally baptized in the fall of 1993 at the age of 19. A few years later, a rift hit our branch. Hurt feelings and disagreements led to my family's departure.

In April 2002, my wife and I were married, and in April 2003, our first child was born. An elder from Independence traveled to our home to give our son his baby blessing. I had lost my job shortly before he was born, and the only job I could find in my field was 90 miles away in Columbus, OH. An area I never wanted to live. After 1.5 years of driving back and forth to that job, we moved to the Columbus area. Our second child was born in 2006. During this time, we were not attending church. I was not even reading and studying as I should have been. I had walked away. Not because of malice, or any hard feelings toward God. But because people had once again made things too difficult for my liking. After our second child was born however, I began to feel the importance of coming back to the church. Of coming back to the Lord. I know now that this was the Lord working on my heart. I was starting to feel the weight of responsibility I had as a father of a young family, a person who is responsible for the spiritual needs of his family. Fortunately, there was a small restoration branch in Columbus that we were able to attend. Everyone there was immediately welcoming and loving. My wife, who was not a member of the church at the time, fell in love with them. Our youngest was born in 2008 while we were still in Columbus. Our two youngest were blessed by the elders in Columbus, and we thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship and worship we shared there.

In 2013 we were able to move back to Lima. We had no branch to attend, but we started to get together with other family members for scripture study. This was sporadic, and we would all find excuses to cancel. We had good intentions, but no follow through. However, in 2015, my sister traveled with my mom and took her children and mine to Temple Grove. This set our families on a course back to the Lord, and a commitment and dedication of our lives to him. A testimony to share another time.

I share all of that, to say this: I love the saints. I enjoy being around them. I enjoy being together with them in gatherings of all sizes. Beyond that, I enjoy being with followers of Christ regardless of denomination. Those that are truly seeking Him, not just with flattering words. These are a different kind of people. Good people. You know, you can quickly discern the true intention of people's hearts. Just let

them talk a little bit. As you talk to them, use words like “blessed” or “prayer”. You’ll always get a response to those kinds of words. They don’t produce a neutral reaction. They will either be well received, or they’ll prompt a sudden change in discussion topic.

I was called to the priesthood in 2016. After about a 1.5 years, I finally received the testimony of that call, and was ordained a priest. In 2018, I was ordained an elder. The Lord called me, someone who doesn’t like to even be around people, to be a servant to...people. Now, how does someone like this handle the burden and responsibility of fulfilling the responsibilities of a priesthood member? It fills me with joy. I sometimes feel selfish. Regardless of the type of ministry I am called to provide; preaching, teaching, administrations, or even cooking and cleaning. No matter the call, whenever I respond to the Lord’s call, I am filled with love and joy. I sometimes feel that I have received more by serving than those that I have served. I always pray that isn’t the case, but the Lord blesses us when we have a desire to serve. The phrase “blessed to be a blessing” often comes to mind. The words of King Benjamin ring so true for me *“And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God.”* -Mosiah 1:49.

Now, when I am in the world at a gathering, am I shy? Absolutely. Do I try to sit at the back and keep to myself? Absolutely. But I also try to keep my eyes open for opportunities to help others. One on one. I ask the Lord to direct me. I ask him to help me to know if I can in some way be of service to someone. Not for personal recognition of course, but for His glory. Sometimes, it has only required me to be willing to listen so that someone can unburden themselves with a concern by talking about it. As followers of Christ we are to *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”* Romans 12:15. I was recently asked to bless the meal at a neighborhood block party where my in-laws live. I happily did so. No introductions or explanations, just “please bow with me for a blessing on the food”. No unnecessary embellishments, just get to the work at hand. Each time I serve, the Lord gives me a little more confidence, and a little more light. Section 4 tells us that *“...if ye have desires to serve God, ye are called to the work...”*. So, I desire to serve God, and he has put me to work.

I’ll conclude these thoughts with these words from Nephi *“... I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded; for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”* – 1 Nephi 1:65. If God asks us to do something, He will give us the strength and means by which we can accomplish it. Where we are weak, He can make us strong. Where we are shy and uncomfortable, He can give us confidence.

P.S. As an aside, I am happy to say that the rift we once had in Lima is on the mend. We all now worship together, have meals, and special events. While I cannot say that all is completely healed, I can say the Lord is working in us all to that end.

Sean Telljohann
stelljohann@outlook.com