

How Can I Magnify?

Brothers and Sisters: I look forward to the time when we will be able to actually stand at the podium and look out and see your faithful faces! Clearly, that day is not today, so we will write our thoughts and impressions for your review.

Over the past few weeks while conducting virtual temple recommend interviews, the following question has been asked a couple of times. It starts with the person mentioning their calling in the church and then asking: "President, how do I magnify my calling? With the social restrictions placed on us because of the current pandemic, it seems more challenging today to magnify a calling than it did just six months ago.

This question caused me to think of the universal nature of this challenge. My calling in the Stake Presidency has not changed, but the way I magnify it certainly has! Same with my eternal callings of Husband and Father! I began to think of all the presidencies, bishoprics, teachers, missionaries, organists, ministering brothers and sisters. The list seemed without end. I also thought of our youth and primary children and of their (also eternal) callings of sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. When I thought of this, the question seemed even more important. How do we magnify all these responsibilities and callings?

As I began to ponder, my mind began to wander. As a younger man, I used to try to prevent these meandering thoughts. I have realized over time that these wanderings are part of my pondering process.

I remembered an instance where a group of company officers and leaders were assigned to evaluate each division of the company encompassing multiple locations in several states. They were provided a large passenger van for traveling. The first couple weeks of their assignment went smoothly enough. Several sites were visited and evaluated. As they continued their assignment, they crossed state lines and became accustomed to brief hotel stays and restaurant meals, yet fatigue began to creep in.

During a day with a particularly long drive, it was determined that the next small town would be an excellent opportunity to stop for fuel, purchase food and snacks, stretch weary legs and take a break from the road trip. Soon, they selected and pulled up to the gas station, parked the van at the gas pump and all travelers bailed out of the van for a needed break.

For the next fifteen minutes, much was accomplished. Aching muscles were stretched, nourishment and drinks were secured. The rejuvenated clan climbed back into the van and resumed their travels.

They exited the freeway, entering a lightly travelled state road and continued their trip. Almost thirty minutes after their stop, the engine to the van started to sputter, hesitate and jerk. Then, all power was lost and the van coasted to a stop at the side of the lonely road. In the quiet moments that followed, the dashboard suddenly became the source of truth. They had no more gas.

"How could this happen?" they asked. "Who is to blame?" was next. The vehicle had parked directly next to the pump. It had remained there for fifteen minutes. The most important reason for the stop was to purchase fuel! Yet not one of the nine corporate officers and leaders present had thought to place the nozzle in the van nor pump the gas. Since the most senior officer was driving the van, it was quickly decided that he was "clearly" not to blame. Soon, all but one agreed that blame should be

placed on the most junior person in the van – one of the two guys in the last seat! The “guilty one” set out on foot to procure gasoline. Fortunately - after a relatively short walk - he soon found a place where the road and an adequate cell signal intersected and called for help.

How could nine intelligent people all miss the critical assignment of buying gas to fuel the van? And how can this situation help inform us on the question of how to magnify our callings?

There was a lot going on at the gas station. People to observe, restrooms to visit, food and drinks to procure, lines to stand in, payments to be made . . . , and gas to be pumped. With one single exception, the stop was a total success! In reality, every traveler in the van knew that they had personally (and as a group) failed to take care of the van. As a tow truck with the gasoline arrived and as they sheepishly drove back to the gas station, assignments were made for critical trip responsibilities moving forward.

As the Savior prepared his wonderful apostles to magnify their callings in his impending absence, Jesus asked Peter “lovest thou me?” Three times Peter answered affirmatively. Three times in repetition Christ taught Peter to “feed his sheep.” I believe that here lies the key to magnifying our callings: are we feeding the sheep? Are we feeding the lambs? Are we ministering to every individual to whom the Savior would expect us to minister? Or are we letting the odd hustle and bustle of our virtual pandemic-gas station shopping experience cloud our focus and failing to take care of a duty we all know is as important as petroleum for a vehicle?

Perhaps for some a checklist like the one made by our intrepid van travelers would be helpful? Perhaps, sitting in a quiet place and pondering how we have been serving/ministering/feeding each sheep would help us to better do the trick! Perhaps a call? Perhaps a text? Maybe an old fashioned letter or a socially acceptable contact. Brothers and sisters, you have been given the gift of the Holy Ghost. He will guide you with the feeding – as long as you don’t get too distracted with other (admittedly important) things.

May I take a moment and focus on magnifying a few callings that we often overlook? I seek the attention of our youth and our primary children but what I am about to say applies similarly to both young and old. Will you ever be released from your calling as a son? A daughter? Sister? Brother? (Or for those of us that are older: mom, dad, husband or wife?) Young people, please consider the following about your parents: while they may look mostly calm and in charge, I am almost certain that they were never trained on how to protect a family from a weird, invisible, aggressive virus! They worry and pray about you. They have adjusted things to protect you. They are working hard to provide food and safety at a time where the world is challenging their every effort.

As a daughter or a son, do you know how powerful you are when you minister to your mom or your dad? How you lift them with your simple actions? Watch them light up as you hug them or say that you love them! Watch their face as you specifically thank them for something they have done for you?

I once heard a mom brag about her son by saying: “I think that boy lays awake at night thinking about new ways to surprise me and the other kids with secret acts of kindness.” The boy had resolved to do small favors when nobody was looking. He also wanted to do them without being caught, but somehow everybody in the family suspected it was him.

I have two sons and they are both grown now. Over the years they have ministered to me by making things that I love. I display some of these things in my office at work. One is a plate, clearly painted by a

young son. A clown is in the middle of the plate and the words around the edge say “best clown dad.” Clearly my dad jokes were both epic and appreciated. Another is a piece of wood with a picture of a covered wagon wood-burned on it. It states “return with honor.”

I spend a lot of hours in my office and my sons wanted me to remember them while I worked. Importantly, they also wanted me to remember that the instructions I had given them applied just as evenly to me.

To all my friends, both young and almost young: please don't forget to fill that virtual tank! You can gloriously magnify your callings! People are depending on you. They need you to care. They need you to remember. To love. They need you to minister. And each of you have a special gift. Many of you received it when you were eight. The gift of the Holy Ghost allows the Holy Spirit to guide you, to assist you and to prompt you. Find quiet places to listen to Him. Find the courage to act on His promptings. If you do so, I promise that blessings will naturally flow to you and all that you serve, and I promise this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen!