

True Christlike Service Is Seldom Convenient

BY ELDER VAUGHN J. FEATHERSTONE

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

Recently I returned home from a mission presidents' seminar. We held meetings all day, and then I caught an airplane back to Salt Lake City. By the time I arrived home I had been up about 17 hours. I changed into my sleep wear and climbed in bed. My wife and I talked for a few moments; then the telephone rang.

A boyhood friend, one I had known since my early school days, was calling me. "Brother Vaughn," he said in a trembling voice, "my daughter is back in the hospital. She has had several major seizures. She has stopped breathing twice. She is on oxygen but seems to be failing fast."

I asked if she had been administered to.

"No, we were hoping you could come and bless her."

The physical body was tired. I felt I had earned the rest. I also knew my wife was glad to have me home for a while and the flesh wavered. However, the spirit knew precisely what was to be done. I said, "Joe, I will be there in about 30 minutes." We live about a half an hour from the University of Utah Hospital, in Salt Lake City.

I turned to my wife and asked her if she would like to go with me. This noble woman said yes. We both got up, dressed, and drove to the hospital.

I embraced this sweet friend that I had known for more than 46 years. We found a little room, and along with family members we joined in a prayer of great faith.

Then Joe and I went to the intensive care room and gave his daughter a blessing. We pleaded with the Lord and had a sweet, peaceful assurance come over us that she was in his care. At the time, I wondered whether or not she would live through the blessing.

My sweet wife waited in the car. We drove home, and we were not tired or exhausted any more. We were deeply grateful to be worthy enough to be called upon. At the time of the writing of this article, Joe's daughter is alive. She is a miracle.

Opportunities for Christian acts of service do not always come at convenient times. Approximately two or three years ago I was in southern California. I had reorganized a stake. Just as I was getting ready to go out to the airport where I could relax, a woman approached me. She was in her mature years and she said, "Elder Featherstone, are you going back to

Salt Lake City today?" I said, "Yes." She continued, "Are you going on that four o'clock flight?" I responded that I was. Then she said, "Would you mind doing a favor for me?" I quickly thought about the schedule I had just been through, and the flesh was begging for a little break. I assumed she wanted me to hand carry something to her relatives. I never check baggage unless I absolutely have to. I wondered if I would have to check what it was I assumed she wanted me to bring back. I thought about waiting at the baggage claim for the item; then I wondered where it would need to be delivered. Only a moment's pondering and as always, the spirit thrust aside all empty excuses and responded as a service-oriented leader should.

I said, "I will be glad to help in whatever way possible." Then the woman said, "My grandson Phillip has been down here with me for a couple of weeks. How would you like to baby-sit him home to Salt Lake City? He is two-and-a-half years old. His mother will be waiting for him at the airport." We arranged to meet at the Los Angeles Airport, where the grandmother introduced me to Phillip. Just before we boarded the plane she said, "Here is an envelope. Will you wait until you are on the plane to open it?" I found out why she made that request later.

Phillip and I boarded the plane.

I reached into my pocket and opened the letter from the grandmother. It went something like this:

"Dear Elder Featherstone, Thank you for taking Phillip back to Salt Lake City and baby-sitting him for us. We appreciate it. His mother will be there at the airport to meet you; but if she is not there, then here is what you do."

Then she had written, "The reason I did not dare have you open the letter before you were on board the plane is that I did not have enough courage to ask you to do another favor for us. Phillip's brother Ricky is in the University of Utah Hospital. He has had constant seizures, many in one day. The doctors do not know what else to do. They have done all they know, and he still has the problem. Do you think you could possibly find time to go by the hospital and give him a blessing?"

When we arrived in Salt Lake City, there was no one to meet us. We walked the length of the airport terminal. Still no one recognized Phillip. We went down the escalator, past the baggage claim, and out to the street. I have done some unusual things in our marriage, but I wondered what my wife would say when I came home from a stake conference visit and brought a two-and-a-half-year-old boy with me.

I looked around and stood with Phillip for a moment, and then his mother arrived driving a car and stopped by us. She had been delayed in heavy traffic coming to the airport. The sweet mother was very kind, and she loaded a happy Phillip and all his luggage into the car.

A short while later I was standing in one of the pediatric wards at the University of Utah Hospital. There were about six children in cribs. An attendant was mopping the floor, and then he left the room. I was all alone in the hospital room with these six beautiful children.

I found out which was Ricky's bed and went over to him. I said, "My name is Vaughn Featherstone. Do you know who I just left?" He said, "No," and I said, "I came back from Los Angeles today, and I brought your brother Phillip home. I told him I was coming here to see you." Ricky was only about four, but tears came to his eyes. He missed his little brother.

Then I said to him, "Ricky, I am a friend of President Spencer W. Kimball, and he loves you. President Kimball is a prophet. Your grandmother asked me if I would give you a blessing. Do you know what it means when someone lays his hands on your head and gives you a blessing?" He said, "Yes." And then I said, "Ricky, do you believe in Jesus?" He said, "Yes." "Do you know that Jesus loves you? Do you know that Jesus can heal you?" He answered, "Yes." Then I asked, "Would you like me to give you a blessing so you can be healed?" "Yes," he said.

I laid my hands upon his head and gave Ricky a blessing. An interesting thing happened in the little pediatric ward. The other children stopped playing or crying and seemed to listen.

When I finished the blessing I reached in my pocket and pulled out a beautifully polished rock with my name on it that someone had given me. I gave it to Ricky, so that when his mother came she would know that I had been there.

Two years later I was in the Kingsport Tennessee Stake and a sweet young mother came up to me after conference. She told me it was her mother that had asked me to baby-sit Phillip and bless Ricky and then she said, "Have you ever heard of the results of your blessing?" I told her I had not. Then she shared with me the great miracle, "Ricky has not had another seizure since you gave him the blessing."

It was not convenient to take Phillip home, nor was it convenient for me to go to the University of Utah Medical Center; but it was what Jesus would have done. Our service must always lead us to ask, "What would Jesus do?"

Recently I was telephoned by a close friend who told me his father had died. I expressed my sympathy and asked when the funeral would be. When he told me I looked at my calendar and said, "I would love to be at the funeral to honor your great father and to express my love and sympathy to your mother. But I am getting ready to leave town on an assignment, and I will be extremely busy that day." He said, "Well, we talked about that and thought that your schedule would be too busy to ask you to speak, but father had suggested if you were available you might do it." It is interesting how suddenly everything on my calendar could be adjusted. I said, "You tell your mother I will be there." After the funeral I received a letter. I will only share a paragraph.

"The last few months my husband knew his time was limited here on this earth. One day when we were talking about funeral arrangements, I asked him who he would like to have speak at his service. He said, 'I surely would like to have Brother Featherstone, but I know that as busy as he is that isn't possible.' Then he went on to mention some other good men. When I learned of your coming to speak, I shed many tears of joy. I just couldn't believe with all your many duties and responsibilities that you would come."

Then I realized what this service on my part meant to her. She closed with, “I wonder how the Lord can be so good to me.”

Now you and I both understand it was not having Vaughn Featherstone speak but rather a dying husband’s wish granted that filled her with this great love for the Lord.

Now my young friends, think of all the opportunities you will have to serve at inconvenient times. I promise you that most of the service you render to the Lord will come at times not convenient to you. Think about some of them:

Your call to serve an 18-month mission, right in the middle of your schooling, courting, and vocational training.

A call to serve in the ward when you have school grades to maintain and a social life to fulfill.

An invitation to speak at church.

Home teaching visits.

Early-morning seminary, which in many stakes begins at 6:00 A.M., not a convenient hour.
A hospital visit to a sick friend.

Assisting a friend in his or her school election campaign.

Someone with a flat tire or other car problems on the highway. It generally is not a convenient time to stop.

Shoveling snow or mowing a lawn of someone in need—a widow or neighbor—when your day is already too full.

I could list many, many more opportunities that may well come to all of us in a lifetime but most often at an inappropriate time. You can make a decision that you are too busy, but that is generally only an excuse. The old statement, “When you want to get the job done, get the busy man to do it,” is still accurate. We were born to serve our fellowmen.

My beloved young friends, determine to serve one another. Listen to the spirit when your flesh is weak. For truly the Master said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” ([Matt. 25:40](#)). The blessings are tenfold when we do those good, kindly acts of Christian service when it is inopportune or not convenient.