

The Doctrine of Callings

I was recently released as the Primary chorister in our ward, and it has been a learning experience for me. Several years ago I was released as a counselor in the bishopric, and for about a half hour after the interview with the Stake President I felt quite upset. After a little while, though, it occurred to me that this is the Lord's church, and he could call me or release me as he sees fit. I think that my understanding has increased, though, with this most recent experience.

We all understand that we do not volunteer in the Church; we serve where we are called. Generally we recognize that implicit with each calling is an eventual release. However, what I realized about this particular release is that the calling of Primary chorister was never *my* calling, it was always the Lord's calling. He put me in the calling at the time he deemed appropriate, and when it fit His timetable he released me and called someone else to that position.

Understanding this doctrine emphasizes this fundamental truth about the Church: it is not ours, but the Lord's. We each place our individual stamp on the callings we hold, and probably there are many decisions made which don't match exactly the Lord's will. But He will never allow this church to wander off and become lost, because it belongs to Him, not the members. As we humble ourselves and recognize this fact we can be made instruments in His hands to do great things, which would otherwise be beyond us. If we think of callings, or the church, as belonging to us we severely limit the extent to which we can grow and serve.

In discussing this idea with a friend I thought of the example of some charge cards I have seen. On the back there is a statement to the effect that the card remains the property of the issuing agency, and may be reclaimed at any time. We rarely see that prerogative exercised with charge cards; it is more of a legal back-up than anything else. But the Lord is much more interested and involved in His church than the card owners, and he does remind us of that by recalling His callings from time to time. In this way we are constantly reminded of where we stand before Him, and we can be appropriately grateful.

Finally, this emphasis on the fact that callings are not ours can, if we allow it to, remind us of our true nature. In the eternal sense we are not defined at all by our *callings*, but our *faithfulness in our callings* can be an important part of our eternal identity. It is vital that we understand that the prophet of the church does not have some eternal advantage because of his high and holy calling, but by what he became to be prepared for that calling. Whether we

are called as prophet or Sunday School teacher, we can be prepared to be a prophet, and thus benefit eternally.

And so I am grateful for the callings I have held. Of those I have particularly enjoyed I tend to think of Missionary, Ward Clerk, Counselor in the bishopric, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery leader, and Primary Chorister. But each calling is a blessing from the Lord, and recognizing his sovereignty in those callings makes them all the more sweet and valuable to me.