Let me begin with a well-known verse from the Book of Mormon about the young and valiant Captain Moroni:

“If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men” (Alma 48:17).

What a compliment to a famous and powerful man. I can’t imagine a finer tribute. Two verses later is a statement about Helaman and his brethren, who played a less conspicuous role than Moroni:

“Now behold, Helaman and his brethren were no less serviceable unto the people than was Moroni” (Alma 48:19).

In other words, even through Helaman was not as noticeable or conspicuous as Moroni, he was as serviceable; that is, he was as helpful or useful as Moroni.

Obviously we could profit greatly by studying the life of Captain Moroni. He is an example of faith, service, dedication, commitment, and many other godly attributes. Instead I have chosen to focus on those who are not in the limelight, yet are “no less serviceable,” as the scripture phrased it.

Not everyone is going to be the student body president or the Relief Society president or the teacher of the elders’ quorum. Not all are going to be like Moroni catching the acclaim all day every day. No, most will be quiet, relatively unknown folks who come and go and do their work without fanfare. To those of you who may find that lonely or frightening or just unspectacular, I say [page 6] you are “no less serviceable” than the most spectacular of your associates. You, too, are part of God’s army.

Football season is upon us. I am reminded of the contribution of each player to the success of any team. Understandably enough, the quarterback is often given more attention than the other players, but his skill, learning, and efforts would be of little value if the other players did not play their part. Imagine what would happen if, on each play of the game, the guard, or one of the other offensive linemen laid down on the job or gave up his effort to protect the quarterback. What if the rest of the team decided not to put forth their very best effort? The answer is obvious. The quarterback could contribute nothing to the team.

Like the offensive linemen and other unsung heroes on the football team, most of us may spend much of our lives giving service in relative obscurity. Consider the profound service a mother or father gives in the quiet anonymity of a worthy Latter-day Saint home. Think of the Gospel Doctrine teachers and Primary choristers and Scoutmasters and Relief Society visiting teachers who serve and bless millions but whose names will never be publicly applauded.

The limelight of contemporary attention so often focuses on the “one” rather than the many. Individuals are frequently elevated as heroes. But sometimes that recognition is not deserved or may even celebrate the wrong values. This presents us with the challenge to choose wisely our heroes and examples, while also giving thanks for those legions of friends and citizens who are not so famous but who are “no less serviceable” than the Moronis of our lives.

Many who read the story of the great prophet Nephi almost completely miss another valiant son of Lehi whose name was Sam. Nephi is one of the most famous figures in the entire Book of Mormon. But Sam? Sam’s name is mentioned only ten times in the scriptures. When Lehi counseled and blessed his posterity, he said to Sam:

“Blessed art thou [Sam], and thy seed; for thou shalt inherit the land like unto thy brother Nephi. And thy seed shall be numbered with his seed; and thou shalt be even like unto thy brother, and thy seed like unto his seed; and thou shalt be blessed in all thy days” (2 Ne. 4:11).

The role of Sam was basically one of supporting and assisting his more acclaimed younger brother, and he
ultimately received all the blessings promised to Nephi and his posterity. Nothing promised to Nephi was withheld from the faithful Sam, yet we know very little of his service and contribution. He was almost an unknown in life, but he is obviously a victor in the annals of eternity.

The names and memories of such men and women who were “no less serviceable” are legion in the Book of Mormon. Whether it be Mother Sariah or the simple maid Abish, servant to the Lamanite queen, each made contributions unacknowledged by the eyes of men, but not unseen by the eyes of God.

Of course there are examples of these serviceable individuals in our dispensation as well. Oliver Granger is mentioned in the 117th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Oliver’s name may be unfamiliar to many, so I will take the liberty to acquaint you with him.

Oliver Granger was 11 years older than Joseph Smith and, like the Prophet, was from upstate New York. Because of severe cold and exposure when he was 33 years old, Oliver lost much of his eyesight. Notwithstanding his limited vision, he served three full-time missions. He also worked on the Kirtland Temple and served on the Kirtland High Council.

When most of the Saints were driven from Kirtland, Ohio, the Church left some debts unsatisfied. Oliver was appointed to represent Joseph Smith and the First Presidency to return to Kirtland to settle the Church’s business. He performed this assignment so well that one of the creditors wrote: “Oliver Granger’s management in the arrangement of the unfinished business of people that have moved to the Far West, in redeeming their pledges and thereby sustaining their integrity, … has entitled him to my highest esteem” (Horace Kingsbury, Painesville, 26 Oct. 1838).

When he died in 1841, even though there were but few Saints remaining in the Kirtland area and even fewer friends of the Saints, Oliver Granger’s funeral was attended by a vast concourse of people.

Though Oliver Granger is not as well known today as other early leaders of the Church, he was, nevertheless, important in the service he rendered to the kingdom. And of course, if no one but the Lord had his name in remembrance, that would be a sufficient blessing for any of us.

We should be aware that there can be a spiritual danger to those who misunderstand the singularity of always being in the spotlight. They may come to covet the recognition and thus forget the significance of the service being rendered.

If the limelight of popularity should fall on you sometime in your life, follow the example of those in the scriptures who received recognition. Nephi is one of the great examples. After all he accomplished traveling with his family, his attitude was still fixed on the things that matter most. This is what he said:

“And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

“My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep” (2 Ne. 4:19–20).

The limelight never blinded Nephi as to the source of his strength and his blessings.

If you feel that much of what you do does not make you very famous, take heart. Most of the best people who ever lived weren’t very famous either. Serve and grow, faithfully and quietly. Be on guard regarding the praise of men. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. …”

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

“That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly” (Matt. 6:1, 3–4).