One of our many blessings in this ever-changing Church is the responsibility for cleaning our chapels. As I participated with other ward members I began reflecting on the quality of the job I was doing. This is some of what I learned in my reflections.

Background

When I was young the church houses were cleaned by janitors and Physical Facilities Reps (PFR). We came in the middle of the week and used the church building for our function then went home. When we returned for church on Sunday the building was as clean as we found it when we entered the doors in the middle of the week.

It was very much like my bedroom as a youngster. I wore my clothes and somehow they all got washed, folded, and put in my drawers and in my closet. I never gave the process a thought.

But those days are long gone. The members of the Church are responsible for cleaning their own buildings. Our ward happens to be in a Stake Center, so we have a big building to clean. Since there are three wards meeting in the building my ward is responsible for cleaning it every third month.

Today's cleaning

This morning I showed up at the usual 7:30 a.m. cleaning time and got my assignment. We are fortunate in my ward to have a man in charge who is extremely organized. We each receive a laminated card with a description of the job name and responsibilities printed on the card. With the card we receive all the needed supplies for that job. Some wards aren't as lucky as we are. The card tells you all you need to know about the assigned job responsibility. And on some jobs the card even has some tips for making it easier to do.

My favorite job is the cleaning of the rails in the building. Each room has a strip of wood that goes around the interior of the room. The halls also have a strip, about shoulder height, that goes down each side of the hall all the way around the interior of

the building. They are not hard to clean. It just takes a while, and it saves me from having to get on my knees for anything.

Lesson 1

I had to go clean by myself today, so while I was wiping down the railings with disinfectant I began to think. The railing passes behind the folded chairs in each classroom. In the past I have always just quickly skipped over that section of the wall and moved on with my wiping down.

This time a thought occurred to me. What would I do if I was cleaning with the Savior in this room? Would I skip over those chairs and move on, as usual? Would I feel self conscious about not wiping down every inch of the railing if I knew the owner of the house was standing next to me? Surely He would notice. How would it make Him feel if I was being so casual about keeping His house clean?

Then I arrived at the window. The windows all have wooden ledges at the bottom of the window people put things on and touch each week, but they are hidden by curtains. So easy to skip over and move on. Another detail I had been lackluster in dealing with.

And what about the doors? Each door is opened and propped to stay open, which hides the railing behind the door. Do I skip that as well? What about behind the piano in the corner of the Primary room or the Young Women's room? What about the wooden tables and the piano's themselves? Shouldn't I be cleaning those as well?

Lesson 2

What began as a very simple wipe-it-down job suddenly seemed far more difficult and time consuming. The thought entered my mind that the Savior had done some house cleaning for me too. His Atoning sacrifice paid for my sins. Then I wondered what kind of shape I would be in if He had been as careless and casual in his service to me as I was being in my service to Him. Where would that have left me?

This left me wondering about my own sins and weaknesses. Do I "skim" over them and ignore the inconvenient details of my life as being unimportant? Or do I dig in and try to clean my inner vessel with the same kind of thoroughness I would hope the Savior took in paying the price for my salvation?

Lesson 3

This brings me to the last of my musings. Learning to do better comes with time and desire. At first when I cleaned the wall rails I just skimmed along the top. Only later did I find out that the brother in charge of cleaning the building has a balance disorder that causes him to use those railings to help him move about the building. When he holds on to them he grips both the top and the bottom of the rails. Sometimes when he does this his hand comes away dirty because people only clean the top where the dirt is most visible. Now when I clean I am more aware of the "hidden" dirt that needs to be cleaned. It is just as important as the dirt that is visible.

I saw a new member of the ward with a cleaning card identical to mine today. He was wondering where to start. That set me on a whole new line of thinking.

Where indeed do we start? I have so much to do to clean up my life and get rid of those things that have been sullied or have been collecting dust from lack of use. I decided that starting somewhere, anywhere, is better than not starting at all.

I also realized that as simple as my assignment was - wipe the rails - the more I did it, the more I realized that there was more to that job than just what was on my card. Sure, doing what was on the card fulfilled the responsibilities of the job, but did it do my soul or the Savior justice?

Final Thoughts

The gospel of Christ is a living, breathing, life-changing system. The more we practice (live) what we preach, the more we find that we can do better about the living part of the gospel. When we clean our inner vessel, are we using whitewash or are we truly scrubbing away the graffiti that has accumulated over the years?

I'm grateful that we can come together periodically during the year to clean the Lord's house. I'm grateful for the association to be found there with the faithful saints who

understand the importance of being responsible for taking care of what we have been given by the Lord. And these buildings are indeed a treasure.

I'm also grateful that we are able to learn more about ourselves through the service we render. There never need be an end to our self-discovery if we keep looking for ways to be better today than we were yesterday.

What experiences have you had while cleaning your church house? I'd love to read your responses in the comments below.

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

3 Lessons I've Learned From Cleaning the Chapel