

# Reaching Out in Love:

## TIPS FOR HOME AND VISITING TEACHERS

By Darren E. Schmidt

I will admit I was at a loss for words. I had just spent nearly half an hour trying to help a less-active widowed man, whom I loved, understand why bad things sometimes happen to good people. I had used numerous scriptures and analogies that had often helped my seminary students, but to no avail.

Then suddenly my home teaching companion, my 15-year-old son, spoke up with something he had learned from his personal scripture reading. This took me by surprise. He shared a couple of verses and then testified powerfully of God's love for His children and of His desire to bless us, often doing so through our trials.

This testimony was so powerful, sincere, and meek—just as the Lord has directed such testimonies to be (see D&C 100:3–8)—that the heart of the man miraculously changed. Tears filled his eyes as he expressed gratitude to my son for the words he had spoken. Peace filled the room, and I was reminded of the inspiration that can come to a home teacher, regardless of age or experience, when his desire is to bless, strengthen, and inspire the families he teaches. When home or visiting teachers open their mouths in faith, the Lord can speak

through them (see D&C 33:8–10).

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) gave the following counsel to home teachers—counsel that is also applicable to visiting teachers: “Above all, be a genuine friend to the individuals and families you teach. . . . A friend makes more than a dutiful visit each month. A friend is more concerned about helping people than getting credit. A friend cares. A friend loves. A friend listens, and a friend reaches out.”<sup>1</sup>

### Five Ideas

As we all seek to be better disciples of Jesus Christ and to develop

true friendships with those we home or visit teach, here are some ideas that might be helpful:

*Keep a home or visiting teaching journal.* Take some time following your visit to record how your families or the individuals you visit are doing and any impressions you have about how best to help them. You could also note their birthdays or upcoming events. This is a great way to help you remember things and be more effective in blessing their lives.

*Pray often for the families or individuals you visit, and seek inspiration.* In some cases, there are certain challenges that families or individuals





need to work through on their own. Others may occasionally need special assistance or attention. After thoughtful prayer, home and visiting teachers can follow the promptings of the Spirit to know what is best to do in each circumstance.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught:

“Think of the families or even individuals you have been called to serve. Human judgment and good intentions will not be enough.

“So you will pray for the way to know their hearts, to know what things are amiss in the lives and the

hearts of people whom you don’t know well and who are not anxious to have you know them. You will need to know what God would have you do to help them.”<sup>2</sup>

*Look for opportunities to serve.* Certainly we try to be responsive when those we home or visit teach request our help. In addition, however, we should be looking for opportunities to be “anxiously engaged in a good cause” without having to be asked, knowing that the power is in us and that we will be held accountable for how we use our time and energies (see D&C 58:26–28).

*Be creative.* In addition to a visit, doing something extra can go a long way in developing a friendship with those you home or visit teach. Deliver a birthday treat, mail a card, have them over for a get-together, or drop off a Church video or conference talk you think they might enjoy. The point is to be creative and guided by the Spirit in the ways you choose to serve them.

*Be available to be blessed by home or visiting teachers yourself.* One home teacher expressed to me the joy he felt when one of our children greeted him with a hug at church, saying, “You’re my home teacher!” Home



## EMISSARIES OF THE LORD

“See yourselves as emissaries of the Lord to His children. . . . We would hope . . . that you will establish an era of genuine, gospel-oriented concern for the members, watching over and caring for each other, addressing spiritual and temporal needs in any way that helps.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Emissaries to the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 62.

teachers who visit regularly can inspire our families by their words and examples, as well as add a second witness to the things that we teach our children. This has occurred on many occasions in our home as home teachers have shared inspired messages and invitations with our family. Likewise, by welcoming visiting teachers into their homes, sisters strengthen one another’s faith and discipleship, thereby blessing families, the Church, and the community.

### Helping the Less Active

President Thomas S. Monson gave a hopeful promise to those who visit less-active members: “If we are conscientious in our calling, we will have many opportunities to bless lives. Our visits to those who have distanced themselves from Church activity can be the key which will eventually open the doors to their return.”<sup>3</sup>

In my home, I have a picture of the Savior given to me from a couple I was privileged to home teach. Along with many others in

our ward, we were blessed to help them return to Church activity and later serve in many callings. I consider this one of the sweetest blessings of my life. Observing the spiritual and miraculous change take place in the lives of this couple over a period of years was truly remarkable!

Though we each have great opportunities to bless and strengthen others through our home or visiting teaching efforts, perhaps the greatest blessing we can receive is the closeness that we develop with our Father in Heaven and the Savior in seeking to do Their will, acting on it, and then becoming more like Them in the process. Our Lord has great need of us, and I know that when we are on His errand, we are entitled to His blessings. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Home Teachers of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 50.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “Priesthood and Personal Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 85.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “True Shepherds,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 67.