

Ministering Principles

FIVE THINGS GOOD LISTENERS DO

Truly listening will help you know how to help meet the spiritual and temporal needs of others as the Savior would.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “Perhaps even more important than speaking is listening. . . . If we listen with love, we won’t need to wonder what to say. It will be given to us—by the Spirit.”¹

Listening is a skill we can learn. Listening shows our love for others, helps build strong relationships, and invites the Spirit to bless us with the gift of discernment to help us understand others’ needs.² Here are five ways we can improve how we listen.

Find Common Ground

You might not agree with everything said, but agree with what you can without misrepresenting your own feelings. Being agreeable can help defuse anxiety and defensiveness (see Matthew 5:25).

Reflect

Paraphrase what you heard and how you understand the other to feel. This helps them know if they have been understood and gives them an opportunity to clarify.

Give Them Time

Many people need time to gather their thoughts before speaking. Give them time to think both before and after they say something (see James 1:19). Just because they are finished speaking doesn't mean they have said everything they need to. Don't be afraid of silence (see Job 2:11-3:1 and Alma 18:14-16).

Pay Attention

We think faster than others speak. Resist the temptation to jump to conclusions or to think ahead to what you'll say when they're through (see Proverbs 18:13). Instead, listen with the intent to understand. Your response will be better because it will be informed by greater understanding.

Clarify

Don't be afraid to ask questions that clarify something you didn't understand (see Mark 9:32). Clarifying reduces misunderstanding and shows your interest in what is being said.

President Russell M. Nelson taught that we should “learn to listen, and listen to learn from one another.”³ As you learn to listen with the intent of learning about others, you will be in a better position to understand their needs and hear promptings about how you can care for those around you as the Savior would.

Listening Is Loving

A story from Elder Holland illustrates the power of listening:

“My friend Troy Russell pulled his pickup truck slowly out of his garage. . . .

He felt his back tire roll over a bump. . . . He got out only to find his precious nine-year-old son, Austen, lying face down on the pavement. . . . Austen was gone.

“Unable to sleep, unable to find peace, Troy was inconsolable. . . . But into that agonizing breach came . . . John Manning. . . .

“I frankly don’t know on what schedule John and his junior companion made visits to the Russell home. . . . What I do know is that last spring Brother Manning reached down and picked Troy Russell up off the tragedy of

that driveway just as if he were picking up little Austen himself. Like the . . . brother in the gospel he was supposed to be, John simply took over the priesthood care and keeping of Troy Russell. He started by saying, ‘Troy, Austen wants you back on your feet—including on the basketball court—so I will be here every morning at 5:15 a.m. Be ready. . . .’

“‘I didn’t want to go,’ Troy told me later, ‘because I had always taken Austen with me. . . . But John insisted, so I went. From that first day back, we talked—or rather I talked and John listened. . . . At first it was difficult, but over time I realized I had found my strength in the form of [John Manning], who loved me and listened to me until the sun finally rose again on my life.’”⁴ ■

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Witnesses unto Me,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 15.
2. See David A. Bednar, in “Panel Discussion” (worldwide leadership training meeting, Nov. 2010), broadcasts.lds.org.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Listen to Learn,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 23.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Emissaries to the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 62, 67.

MINISTERING AS THE SAVIOR DID

As Jesus departed from Jericho, two blind men cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord. . . .

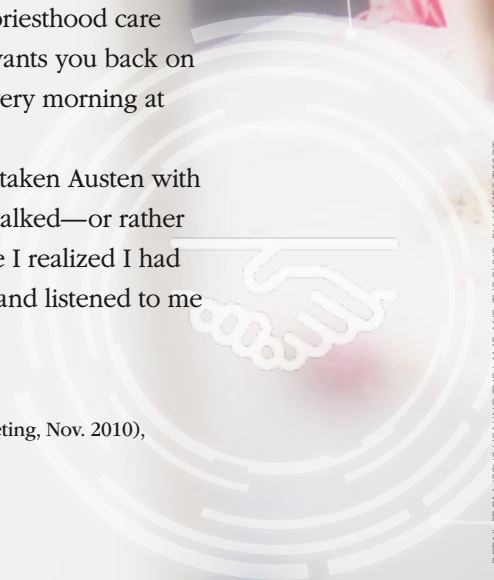
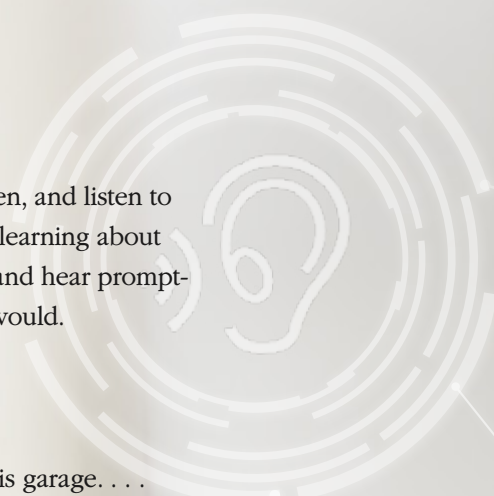
“And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

“They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

“So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes:

and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him” (Matthew 20:30, 32–34).

What can we learn from how the Savior listened?





INVITATION TO ACT

Consider how you will apply these principles in how you minister. Ask those to whom you minister what they need. Listen to their response and the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Act on what you hear.



“Ministering Principles” articles are intended to help us learn to care for one another—not to be shared as messages during ministering visits. As we come to know those we serve, the Holy Ghost will prompt us to know what message they might need in addition to our care and compassion.