

Ministering THAT MATTERS

Ministering that matters includes love and compassion, a listening ear, prayers and priesthood blessings, temporal and spiritual support, and teaching by the Spirit.

The Savior Jesus Christ came to earth to minister to others, spending His days in their service and giving His life for their salvation (see Matthew 20:27–28). As disciples of the Good Shepherd, we look to Him as our example and we follow His command: “The works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do” (3 Nephi 27:21).

Ministering means doing “the work of the Lord on the earth” and helping others to “become true followers of Jesus Christ.”¹ That work, President Thomas S. Monson has said, includes reaching out to “the aged, the widowed, the sick, those with disabilities, the less active, and those who are not keeping the commandments.”

As “we extend to them the hand that helps and the heart that knows compassion,” he added, “we will bring joy into their hearts, and we will experience the rich satisfaction that comes to us when we help another along the pathway to eternal life.”²

Seek the One

In His parable of the lost sheep, Jesus taught an essential principle of effective ministering: leaving “the ninety and nine in the wilderness” and seeking the one (see Matthew

KEYS TO MINISTERING

- Emulate the Savior.
- Reach out to the one.
- Seek inspiration.
- Nurture.
- Be faithful in your ministry.



18:12; Luke 15:4). Whether a person is lost or has gone astray, whether a family needs a spiritual or temporal blessing, or whether members of a ward or stake seek counsel or strengthening, the principle of seeking the one applies.

During a visit to England in 2011, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said when members of the Quorum of the Twelve minister, they seek individuals, following the “one by one” principle found in the Book of Mormon (see 3 Nephi 11:15; 17:21) and helping “to lift, to bless, to do something to help an individual or a family.”

Elder Bednar added: “While I’m in England, the Lord sent me to find a *one*, and along the way I get to participate in a bunch of meetings, and maybe some good will be done. But the keys of the kingdom were sent here to find a *one*. You don’t talk to a congregation; you talk to assembled *ones*.”³

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said true disciples of Jesus Christ are always concerned with the one. “We are to be our brother’s keeper. We cannot neglect this commission given by our Savior. We must be concerned for the one.”⁴



Act on Inspiration

In an address to Relief Society sisters in September 2013, President Monson told the story of a woman named Tiffany, an overwhelmed mother of four children. Stressed and worried after learning that a loved one had been diagnosed with cancer, Tiffany slipped into depression. She also lost her appetite. When scripture reading and prayer brought no peace, she began to feel that her Heavenly Father had abandoned her.

At that juncture, the only thing that sounded good to her was homemade bread. The next day, an “unmistakable feeling” prompted a woman named Sherrie to deliver an extra loaf of bread she had made to Tiffany, though doing so meant driving 30 minutes to the other side of town.

“And so it happened that the Lord sent a virtual stranger across town to deliver not just the desired homemade bread but also a clear message of love to Tiffany,” President Monson said. “What happened to her cannot be explained in any other way. She had an urgent need to feel that she wasn’t alone—that God was aware of her and had not abandoned her. That bread—the very thing she wanted—was delivered to her by someone she barely knew, someone who had no knowledge of her need but who listened to the prompting of the Spirit and followed that prompting.”⁵



WE ARE THE LORD’S HANDS

“We are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness. . . . We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 86.

When we minister, we should seek and heed promptings from the Spirit. As President Monson has said, “If we are observant and aware, and if we act on the promptings which come to us, we can accomplish much good.”⁶

Nurture

In describing the nurturing that new members of the Church received in his day, Moroni wrote, “Their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith” (Moroni 6:4; see also Mosiah 23:18).

Likewise, Heavenly Father’s children in our day—both young and old—need nurturing. Latter-day Saints have covenanted to provide that care by bearing one another’s burdens, by mourning and comforting others, and by standing as witnesses of God (see Mosiah 18:8–9). Ministering that matters includes love and compassion, a listening ear, prayers and priesthood blessings, temporal and spiritual support, and teaching by the Spirit.

“Often small acts of service are all that is required to lift and bless another: a question concerning a person’s family, quick words of encouragement, a sincere compliment, a small note of thanks, a brief telephone call,” said President Monson.⁷

One priesthood holder was surprised to receive a thank-you note from a new ward member for what he considered an insignificant query. He did not know that the new ward member’s divorced daughter was having difficulty adjusting to the new ward and community, but one Sunday he asked the daughter about her children and her college studies. Then he offered a smile and a word of encouragement.

In her thank-you note, the mother wrote:



“I want to thank you for talking to my daughter at church. It made her feel welcome and let her know that someone in this ward cares and is interested in her career and future. It was a very Christian thing to do. I appreciate your thoughtfulness.”

Be Faithful in Your Ministry

During the priesthood session of the October 2013 general conference, President Monson told the story of Dick Hammer, who met and married a Latter-day Saint woman. Willard Milne, assigned as the family’s home teacher, faithfully home taught the family for decades, working to bring Dick into the Church.

During their home teaching visits, Brother Milne and his companion always shared a gospel message and bore their testimonies. Finally, in his 90th year, Brother Hammer joined the Church. A year later he went to the temple, where he was endowed and received his sealing blessings.

Reflecting on his years of effort in working with this family, Brother Milne observed, “My heart fills with gratitude for the blessings the gospel has brought into their lives and for the privilege I have had to help in some way. I am a happy man.”⁸

If we are likewise faithful in our efforts to minister as home teachers, President Monson said, we will bless and be blessed.

“Our efforts in home teaching are ongoing,” he added. “The work will never be concluded until our Lord and Master says, ‘It is enough.’ There are lives to brighten. There are hearts to touch. There are souls to save. Ours is the sacred privilege to brighten, to touch, and to save those precious souls entrusted to our care. We should do so faithfully and with hearts filled with gladness.”⁹ ■

NOTES

1. Guide to the Scriptures, “Minister,” scriptures.lds.org; *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 3.2.3.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Our Responsibility to Rescue,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2013, 5.
3. David A. Bednar, in text and video in “Reaching Many ‘Ones’ in England,” Prophets and Apostles, lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world-many-ones-taught-by-apostle-visiting-england.
4. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Concern for the One,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 18.
5. See Thomas S. Monson, “We Never Walk Alone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 122–23.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Three Goals to Guide You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 121.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “Three Goals to Guide You,” 120–21.
8. See Thomas S. Monson, “True Shepherds,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 67.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “True Shepherds,” 68.

HOME TEACHING: NO GREATER CALLING

One of the most effective ways we can minister to Heavenly Father’s children is through the home teaching program.

“As the priesthood of God we have a shepherding responsibility,” said President Thomas S. Monson. “The wisdom of the Lord has provided guidelines whereby we might be shepherds to the families of the Church, where we can serve, we can teach, and we can testify to them. Such is called home teaching.”¹

Handbook 2: Administering the Church offers counsel that will help home teachers magnify their ministry to the individuals and families within their stewardship.

That ministry includes:

- Remembering the names of those we visit and becoming well acquainted with them (see Moroni 6:4).
- Loving them without judging them (see John 13:34–35).
- Watching over them and strengthening them spiritually “one by one” (3 Nephi 11:15; 17:21).
- Becoming friends with them and visiting them often (see D&C 20:47).²



As we magnify our ministry as home teachers, we will also prayerfully prepare for our visits and seek guidance and inspiration from our Heavenly Father in assessing and meeting the needs of the families and individuals—including the children—we home teach.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) called home teaching an inspired program that “is the heart of caring, of loving, of reaching out to the one—both the active and the less active.” He added: “There is no greater Church calling than that of a home teacher. There is no greater Church service rendered to our Father in Heaven’s children than the service rendered by a humble, dedicated, committed home teacher.”³

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “True Shepherds,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 61.
2. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 3.2.3.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Home Teachers of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 49, 50.