

We Don't Understand the Impact We Have

ELDER LARRY S. KACHER

Well, thanks. Thank you, Elder Wood. What a privilege it is to be here with you, and an honor to be here with Elder Renlund, a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ and truly one of the Lord's chosen servants.

I have talked to several of you, and you have told me how blessed you have been by this seminar. And I wish I could have attended all of it, but I have attended part of it. And the parts that I have attended have been just terrific. And to come here this afternoon and to listen to the wonderful presentation from Brother Wilcox that we have just heard is just enlightening.

Brothers and sisters, I am grateful for the gospel of Jesus Christ. I testify that God lives and that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I know the theme of your seminar has been on ministering, and I'll try and address that topic with some of my own thoughts and feelings in my heart.

I want you to know how grateful I am to be here with you. I'm a convert to the Church. I just talked to a fellow convert not too long ago. I came to Utah to ski many years ago. I was 19 years old, and I had a friend whose sister had joined the Church.

And she convinced her nonmember brother to come, and I came with him. What a blessing it was to see examples like yours that touched my life. And I testify of the power of your examples in those that you serve, both to member and nonmember alike.

A couple of months ago, I had the great blessing of going to Nauvoo on an assignment. And while there, I sat in the attic, the upper room, of the Red Brick Store, where Joseph Smith served as a store clerk. Joseph Smith was a man of service.

And while sitting in that upper room, I heard the story of how Joseph Smith taught nine of the twelve Apostles, revealed to them the endowment ceremony at the temple, how he taught them in that sacred place. And that place became a holy place. And, I guess, anticipating that he would soon depart this earth, he said, Now I roll the work from my shoulders onto yours, or something to that effect.

Following that, following his passing, as the temple was constructed, some 5,600 Saints received their endowments, preparing them for a journey where they would need those blessings from the temple. And when it came time to depart Nauvoo, Brigham Young said to them, We must leave.

But there were some who held back. They held back, brothers and sisters, because they had not yet received their own endowments. And so Brigham Young waited a little longer. And another 292 or so Saints received their endowments, which endowed them with power to be able to cross the plains, which gave them the strength that they needed to endure the trials and tribulations that they had to endure.

President Nelson has taught us about the sacred nature of the temple and its importance. And I know you, brothers and sisters, feel the importance of the temple as President Nelson has pointed us in that direction. You'll recall the words in the Kirtland Temple, the experience of the Prophet Joseph, as he testified:

"The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

"We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

“I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father. . . .

“Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:1–4, 16).

And so reopen, brothers and sisters, or so continue the Restoration of this great work, of which you and I are a part. Now, we’re part of a great work. You serve both member and nonmember alike, and I express my gratitude to you for your service. As Brother Wilcox said, I too have never been in the military, but my father served in World War II, fought with the marines in the Marshall Islands.

And so I have a little bit of an understanding of some of the people that you serve and the great work that you do and the testimony that you bear, by example, by teaching, by whatever means may be needed, of the gospel of Jesus Christ, of our Savior, the life that He lived and the impact that He had on all of us.

Not long ago—as General Authorities, we probably go out to stake conferences two or three times a month. And as part of those conferences, we have the blessing of visiting—administering to different families and going into different homes.

This particular family in Salem, Oregon, the Brown family—I sat across from this couple. They looked into my eyes, and they told me about how their teenage son had recently taken his own life—their only child. I felt inadequate, brothers and sisters—perhaps like you sometimes—wondering what to say.

I felt their pain, but at the same time, I felt in them a great sense of power because others had gone before me, like you, who had helped them understand that there was more to this life than what we see.

And I felt in them a peace that they had because of their testimony and understanding of the plan of salvation. And though I felt inadequate, how grateful I was that others had gone before me and, if you will, prepared the way for them to receive another witness of the plan of salvation, of the life of our Redeemer and what He has done for us, for you and for me.

You know, I often feel inadequate in my service. Perhaps you have felt likewise. In a minute, I’ll talk about some of your own situations that Frank has given me a window into. I wonder, how can I help a couple like the Brown family or the Blanchard family, the next house we went to, whose 13-year-old son had been diagnosed with cancer and was in the process of receiving chemotherapy?

And I thought, what will I say to these people? And then I recognized, as I so often have to step back and remind myself, that it is not me that needs to speak. You have read, like I have, about Enoch in the Pearl of Great Price in chapter 6, when Enoch was called to the work.

And he said, But I am but a lad. I have slow speech, and all the people hate me. How often have you felt like that, brothers and sisters? I can tell you, sitting in front of the Brown family, in front of the Blanchard family, that’s exactly how I felt, until I remembered what the Savior taught Enoch when He said, “Behold my spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me and I in you; therefore walk with me” (Moses 6:34).

I’d like to suggest that, brothers and sisters, this is something that we never forget in our service: to walk with the Lord. And I testify that He will be there to walk with us. Now, you don’t always understand the impact that you

have on those that you serve.

I remember one time as a young bishop, I met a lady who was not a member of the Church. I shook her hand. I welcomed her to church. And that's all I did. A year or two later, after Sister Smith had been baptized, she came up to me, and she said, "Bishop, do you remember the time you shook my hand?"

And I thought, well, that's an interesting question. I thought, I'm safe to say, sure, because I try to shake everybody's hand. And she said to me, "When you took my hand, there was a feeling of electricity that went from your hand all the way up my arm." And I thought, well, that's interesting. I didn't feel anything.

But in our service, when we do it striving to do the Lord's work, we become an instrument in His hands and literally touch and bless people's lives in ways that we don't see. Now, having read your stories, or some of your stories, I know that that is true about you, that you have touched many lives.

Sometimes you see it, and sometimes you don't. And so ours is the responsibility to simply accept that the Lord is using us in this way to bless His children. And I testify, brothers and sisters, that as long as we don't forget that it's His work and not ours, as long as we remember that it is not for our glory but for His, as long as we remain humble and contrite, He will use us in ways that we don't see.

And we can take quiet satisfaction, brothers and sisters, that we are truly His instruments. Now, as I said, I've been reading your mail a little bit. I hope you'll forgive me. Frank was kind enough to share some of the newsletters that are put together, and I appreciate that very much.

And if it's OK with you, I extracted a few of your stories. Now, I've covered them up a little bit. I don't want to reveal any identities. Although, I think you can all learn from them and be blessed by them, because they're precious stories to you.

And from them I've extracted five principles that I'd like to share with you about the role that you play as the Lord's ministers, His shepherds—the light that you bring into the lives of others. Number one, through your stories, I have seen how you understand the importance of accessing the powers of heaven.

Brother Wilcox taught us a little bit about that today. And I'm sure you've heard it in other talks. But you truly do, brothers and sisters, access His power. In this particular case, my heart was touched by an example you shared as you brought comfort through the power of the priesthood.

In this case, there was a sister who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Because you went to the Lord and called upon Him, you felt impressed to give her a blessing of healing. Now I believe you didn't make those words up.

But because you understand your relationship to Heavenly Father, and you understand you have access to His power, you could comfortably lay your hands upon her head and bless her—in this case, with a blessing of healing.

President Nelson taught us something about the importance of accessing the powers of heaven. He said, "It is our privilege to act in the name of Jesus Christ to bless God's children according to His will for them."

And then he goes on to say—and this specifically to the brethren, but it applies equally to the sisters under the authority of the priesthood and by the direction of your faith—"Brethren, there are doors we can open, priesthood blessings we can give, hearts we can heal, burdens we can lift, testimonies we can strengthen, lives we can save, and joy we can bring into the homes of the Latter-day Saints—all because we hold the priesthood of God" ("Ministering

with the Power and Authority of God,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 69, 70).

So brothers and sisters, I commend you for accessing the powers of heaven and invite you to never forget whose work this is. Another story that you shared has to do with the principle of repentance. President Nelson has taught us much about this principle.

Many of those you serve are troubled. And they come to you, sharing their burdens with you. And perhaps sometimes you feel burdened by their burdens as they go from their shoulders onto your shoulders and into your heart.

And you strive to listen to what the Lord would have you do to touch their hearts and help lift these burdens, not taking away their responsibility, but helping them understand the pathway back to the Savior.

In one particular case, you shared how a soldier had made a terrible mistake and had been unfaithful to her spouse. You listened and felt impressed to share the story of the woman taken in adultery. You talked about the emotion you felt as you expressed the love of the Savior to her.

You literally became that instrument at His hands to convey the Savior’s love to help lift her, help her understand that she could be forgiven. She could be made whole. Yes, she’d have to change her life, but it was possible. And you play such a critical role as you help those that you serve understand the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to change and to heal lives.

President Nelson again has taught us so powerfully on this subject. “Repentance is not an event,” he said; “it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind. When coupled with faith, repentance opens our access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. . . .

“When we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves. We choose to grow spiritually and receive joy—the joy of redemption in Him. When we choose to repent, we choose to become more like Jesus Christ!”

And that is another gift that you bring to those that you serve, brothers and sisters, because you understand the doctrine of repentance and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. You touch hearts and change lives.

President Nelson went on to bless us: “I bless you with the courage to repent daily and learn how to exercise full priesthood power.” For you and I each need to repent. We need to practice what we preach. And in so doing, we can help others to experience the same thing.

And then he goes on to say, “I bless you to communicate the love of the Savior to your [brothers and sisters,] wife and children and to all who know you” (“We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 67, 69). I pray that we’ll take President Nelson’s blessing literally, that we’ll use that to bless those that we serve.

Number three, the principle of revelation. President Nelson has taught us so much about this. You become His instrument as you seek to know His will and use that information and that knowledge to bless those that you serve.

In one case, you shared the situation of a sister who came to your ward in the States, whose husband was in Afghanistan and greatly needed a priesthood blessing, and she didn’t know how to reach someone to contact her husband. But you—calling upon the Lord and receiving personal revelation—a thought came to your mind of someone who knew exactly where this brother was.

You contacted that person. And in a short period of time, thousands of miles away, this person was contacted and was blessed, received that priesthood blessing. Why? Because you acted as an instrument in God’s hands. You understood that even though, in and of ourselves, we can’t do much, that God can do anything, and He can literally cross the oceans to bless His children.

President Nelson again said, “If we will truly receive the Holy Ghost and learn to discern and understand His promptings, we will be guided in matters both large and small.” And then he gave us a challenge, brothers and sisters. It’s a challenge I invite you to think about again today.

“I urge you to stretch beyond your current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation, for the Lord has promised that ‘if thou shalt [seek], thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge’ (Doctrine and Covenants 42:61).

“In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost” (“Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2018, 94, 95, 96).

May we seek the Lord’s will in our sacred responsibilities, in yours as chaplains, and the lives that you bless. And I testify that the children that you serve are God’s children. He loves them just as much as He loves you and loves me. And we can be that instrument in His hands to help them to know God’s will.

Number four, you testify in one way or another of the plan of salvation. You help people see with their spiritual eyes, just like Enoch of old. You help people see that there is more to this life than just the mortal probation that we endure, sometimes in a difficult way.

As you testify of the plan of salvation and help others to see that they too have a place in it—and that’s an important point, brothers and sisters—you help others see, member or nonmember, that they have a place in God’s plan. And that God loves them as a child of His. You bring comfort and peace to those who have lost loved ones.

And I know you face that situation, perhaps frequently, depending upon the area where you serve. But a couple of cases—if I could refer to those. You provided comfort at the viewing of a man for whom you had served on the hospice team.

As His daughter felt your love and compassion and, no doubt, your understanding of the plan of salvation, she held you and hugged you, whispering words of gratitude. Perhaps, as you became the Lord’s instrument to communicate His love for the family, you may not always know what to say.

But you can love, and you can reach out. And you become that mighty instrument in God’s hands. And you communicate to these people that there is a plan, perhaps that they don’t know about, but that they feel through your love and compassion.

I think I’ll always be touched by the story of the three-year-old girl that you shared, diagnosed with terminal cancer, who, despite her young age, was able to provide comfort. A three-year-old providing comfort for others as she prepared to depart this mortal existence.

You described how this little girl held her little baby brother in her arms. And this little girl said to her baby brother, “Remember when I am gone that your big sister still loves you,” a reminder that it’s the children who are greatest in the kingdom of God. You helped make those connections. Thank you for doing that.

Finally, number five, you understand the importance of ministering to all, brothers and sisters. As you listen with love and compassion and without judgment, you are following in the footsteps of the Savior. You become rescuers to those who are searching but feel so lost because they don’t know where to find comfort.

How do you do this? How do you do this? You shared the story of a young lady who came to you who was angry at the Church and wanted nothing to do with it. She had been raised in a home with the Church, but somehow, the seeds of testimony did not grow in her.

But because she felt your love, she felt your acceptance, she felt that you were not judging her but you were loving her as she was, she came back. She came back. Thank you for that. Just like the Savior would, without judgment, caring and loving and bringing others back.

In another case, you talked about a soldier who suffered from PTSD, who had lost hope because of the mistakes he had made. And how many are there who have lost hope, brothers and sisters? But he saw in you someone who always had a smile and would allow others to vent without feeling judged. And because of your example, he decided to change, as well. What a blessing you are in that regard.

To able to minister to all. As President Nelson taught, “Effective ministering efforts are enabled by the innate gifts of the sisters and by the incomparable power of the priesthood. We all need such protection from the cunning wiles of the adversary” (“Ministering,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 100). And how do we do this?

Sister Bingham gave such a beautiful summary of this in conference not too long ago: “Sometimes we think we have to do something grand and heroic to ‘count’ as serving. . . . Yet simple acts of service can have profound effects. . . . What did the Savior do? . . . He . . . smiled at, talked with, walked with, listened to, made time for, encouraged, taught, fed, and forgave. He served family and friends, neighbors and strangers alike” (“Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 104). Those simple acts of service and love provide a template for our ministering today. That’s what you do, brothers and sisters. You don’t have to perform heroic deeds. All you have to do is feel close to the Lord, listen to the promptings of the Spirit, and have love in your heart, and you become the instrument for change in people’s lives.

What was the message of the Master? “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). True joy, as we’re taught, comes from love manifested through our ministering to our brothers and sisters. “Whosoever will be [greatest] among you, shall be your minister” (Mark 10:43), shall be your chaplain—shall be your chaplain.

And I equate the word chaplain with minister and with servant. He shall be greatest among you. She shall be greatest among you. Because he or she knows that it is through ministry, through serving, that we lift Heavenly Father’s children.

Now, I’ve got a couple thoughts before I conclude that I’d like to share with you. A little bit more personal in nature, but I’d like to share them with you, all the same. I’m the only member of the Church in my family—of my family, of my parental home.

I tried for 40-plus years, and still try, to share the gospel with my family, one way or the other— never took. My father passed away not interested at all in hearing what I had to say. Finally, when my mother was 90 years old, she agreed to listen to the sister missionaries.

I thought, finally. She was in Minnesota, where I’m from. I was in Utah. She didn’t call after her first lesson. I wondered how it went. Finally, I gained enough courage to call her up and said, “Mom, how did it go?” And she said, “Not very well. I did all the talking. They were very nice, and I never want them to come back.”

Well, my heart sank a little bit, brothers and sisters. My heart sank. And I thought, oh, Mom, if you only knew the message that they had. A couple days later, the phone rang. It was my mother.

I was about to walk into a stake priesthood meeting. And I thought, oh, I don’t want her faith to weigh my faith down. So I didn’t pick up the phone—goes to show you how strong my faith is sometimes.

[LAUGHTER]

But I did listen to her message, brothers and sisters. And this is the message that she left with me. She said, “Don’t give up on me. Don’t give up on me.”

And it’s a message I’d like to invite you to consider, to never give up on those that you’re serving, but to remember that they’re God’s children. And just as God would never give up on us, we have no right, brothers and sisters, to give up on His children, despite the frustration that we might feel or the discouragement we might experience.

Well, some time ago, when my wife and I were serving in Africa, she and I had the opportunity to kneel—my mother had passed away by then—across the altar for my mother and father’s proxy in the Accra Ghana Temple and to be sealed for them for time and for all eternity.

Now President Nelson has said to us that the work goes on on both sides of the veil—both sides of the veil. So you and I need to have the faith necessary to believe that, brothers and sisters, to do all that we can. But to know that in God’s plan, He has provided a way for all of His children to receive the saving ordinances of the gospel.

Now, I hope and pray that my mom and dad have now accepted the gospel and have received their saving ordinances and associated covenants. They are good people. I am grateful for them. I wish they would have received the restored gospel in this life, but they did not.

You probably have members of your family or friends that you know who have walked away from the gospel or perhaps have never received it. Well, my invitation to you is, as you serve those in your service, think of your family members; think of your friends, perhaps, who haven’t received all the blessings of the gospel in their lives right now, or who have walked away from it.

And as you serve those that you serve, think about these people in hope, and realize that perhaps there is somebody in another part of the world praying for them, that they’ll find their way. And I believe that as you take upon yourself the challenge to never give up on those that you’re serving, prayers of others will be answered.

And your prayers will be answered, as well, for those that you love the most. Now, sometimes, things work out differently. A few months ago, we were at a stake conference in Tooele, Utah. I shared this story on a Saturday night session.

Unbeknownst to me, there was a 90-year-old nonmember grandmother there who had come to hear her grandson speak. And as I shared this story, she turned to her member daughter—the only one in her family, from her parental family—she turned to her daughter and said, “Don’t give up on me.”

Three weeks later, this 90-year-old grandmother, Norma Pitt, was baptized. She was baptized on this side of the veil. I testify of God’s power, brothers and sisters.

Now the second thing I wanted to share with you before I conclude has to do with a story that I once heard. I was told that President—that Elder Uchtdorf—I think then President Uchtdorf—had shared. I don’t know if it’s true or not, but Elder Renlund can correct me when he gets up to speak if I got this wrong.

But he talked about a husband and a wife, and that’s the theme, is family. Because that’s what it comes down to, is family. A man and a woman had been married for—before they got married, the wife-to-be asked her husband to make a promise to her. You see, she brought a little wooden box into the marriage.

And she said, “Never ask me to open this box—never.” Well, if that’s all it took to marry her, he was ready and

willing. So he accepted her commitment, didn't ask her until their 50th anniversary. He couldn't take it any longer. And he said, "Honey, can't you just tell me what's in the box?" And she said, "Oh, I suppose it's OK." She opened it up. Inside the box were two doilies, two doilies that she had crocheted, and \$5,000. And he was confused. And he said, "What are these doilies?"

And she said, "My mother told me that when I was married, that if I ever got angry at you, that I should crochet a doily." And he looked at those two doilies and thought, 50 years of marriage, and all she crocheted was two doilies. I must be pretty good. And then he said, "What about the \$5,000?" And she said, "That's the money I made selling all the other doilies."

[LAUGHTER]

Now, brothers and sisters, there's a message in there somewhere. Several years ago—Elder Renlund may remember this—President Packer stood up at a leadership meeting that we had before a general conference.

And in that meeting, he looked at all the Brethren, all the Apostles—Elder Holland, Elder Scott at the time, Elder Perry—all the General Authority Seventies and all the Area Seventies, of which I was a member at the time—and he looked at us, and he said, "Brethren, you don't treat your wives good enough. You need to treat them better."

Brothers and sisters, I have never forgotten that message. I have never forgotten the importance of family and family relationships. I have reflected often on President Packer's comment.

And brethren, those of you who are married and are here today, I want you to reflect upon that, whether you're the chaplain or the spouse of a chaplain, that our wives are so precious and so sacred in the Lord's eyes that we have a sacred duty and responsibility to treat them better.

I invite you to ponder that and to think about it. And ask yourself, What can I do to repent? What can I do each day to treat my spouse, my wife, just a little bit better? Paraphrasing something in another context, what good does it do if we have served so many other people, but we have lost the love of our own family?

What is it that you'll take with you after this life? It's not riches or fame or anything else. It is the knowledge that you acquired, and your beloved family. So I invite you to consider that and to ponder that.

I invite you to think upon the messages that you've heard these last few days and over general conference, to recognize and realize how grateful Heavenly Father is for you, how much He loves you, and how much He cares about you. I want to thank you, brothers and sisters, for your service, for your example.

I have felt your love, those of you who I have had the opportunity to meet. I've heard many stories about how we are here because we have felt guided here, guided by the hand of the Lord, or perhaps not called in some formal way, but perhaps in another way even more important—called directly by God to fill the assignments that you are filling now, to bless His children in so many different parts of the world.

I express my gratitude and love to you for this service. Now, before I conclude, I want to say one final thing. Five years ago, before Elder Renlund was called to be an Apostle of the Lord, I had a training assignment as a new General Authority. I served on what's called the Restoration and Cancellation Committee. This is the committee that reviews many cases of people who are working to come back into the Church.

And I remember one case that I was reading—I couldn't believe all the terrible things that this person had done in their life. But they had repented. It took many years to do so, but they had repented. And I brought it to the committee, and I said, "I don't see how there is any way that this person could receive their blessings again."

And Elder Renlund, who chaired that committee, taught me a very important lesson. He said, “It is here where we see the Atonement of Jesus Christ at work.” I have never forgotten those words, brothers and sisters, shared by Elder Renlund, his testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ. And in a moment, we’ll have the opportunity to listen to a special witness of the Savior.

But may I conclude with my testimony. My life has changed completely because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is not a day that I look back on my baptism on January 8, 1972, that I don’t express my gratitude to Heavenly Father for the blessings that I have received.

I testify that God lives. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer, that through the Atonement, lives are changed. I know that because my life has been changed. I testify that you are instruments in His hands to bless His children.

I testify that President Nelson is a prophet of God who is that mighty instrument on the earth today to do His work, to lead us and guide us. I pray that we will listen carefully and closely to His words in all that we do. And I leave you with my testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.