



# Visiting Teaching

UNDERSTANDING  
THE POWER  
OF MINISTERING

*Our Heavenly Father needs us to follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship by sincerely caring for His children.*

**D**uring Christ's mortal life, He ministered to others. As we desire to be His disciples, we must look to Him as our example. He taught, "The works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do" (3 Nephi 27:21). The New Testament is filled with examples of Christ's ministering. He revealed to the woman of Samaria that He was the Messiah. He healed Peter's mother-in-law. He restored the daughter of Jairus to her parents and Lazarus to his grieving sisters. Even as He suffered on the cross, the Savior "expressed concern for His mother, who by then was likely a widow in need of watchcare."<sup>1</sup> On the cross, He asked John to watch over His mother.

## By the Relief Society General Presidency



Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, said: “Through Relief Society [and visiting teaching] we practice being disciples of Christ. We learn what He would have us learn, we do what He would have us do, and we become what He would have us become.”<sup>2</sup>

### Understanding the Power of Ministering

Ministering and providing relief to others have always been the heart of Relief Society. “Throughout the years, Relief Society sisters and leaders have learned one step at a time and have improved in their ability to watch over others,” said Sister Beck. “There have been times when sisters have focused more on completing visits, teaching lessons, and leaving notices when they have stopped by their sisters’ homes. These practices have helped sisters learn patterns of watchcare. Just as people in the time of Moses concentrated on keeping long lists of rules, the sisters of Relief Society have at times imposed many written and unwritten rules upon themselves in their desire to understand how to strengthen one another.

“With so much need for relief and rescue in the lives of sisters and their families today, our Heavenly Father needs us to follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship by sincerely caring for His children. With this important purpose in mind, leaders are now taught to ask for reports about the spiritual and temporal well-being of sisters and their families and about service rendered. Now visiting teachers have the responsibility to ‘sincerely come to know and love each sister, help her strengthen her faith, and give service.’”<sup>3</sup>

Our Relief Society history, *Daughters in My Kingdom*, and *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* teach us how we can follow a higher path and demonstrate our discipleship:

- Pray daily for those you visit teach and their families.
- Seek inspiration to know the needs of your sisters.
- Visit your sisters regularly to comfort and strengthen them.
- Contact your sisters frequently through visits, phone calls, letters, e-mail, text messages, and simple acts of kindness.
- Greet your sisters at church.
- Help your sisters when they have an illness or other urgent need.
- Teach your sisters the gospel from the scriptures and the Visiting Teaching Message.
- Inspire your sisters by setting a good example.
- Report your sisters’ spiritual and temporal well-being to a Relief Society leader.<sup>4</sup>

### Focusing on Ministering

We are the Lord’s hands. He is dependent upon each of us. The more we see our visiting teaching assignment as one of the most important responsibilities we have, the more we will minister to those we visit.

1. We will provide experiences that invite the Spirit and help our sisters increase in faith and personal righteousness.
2. We will care deeply about those we visit and help them strengthen their homes and families.
3. We will take action when our sisters are in need.

Following is the example of Maria and Gretchen—visiting teachers who understand the power of ministering. Here we can see that now visiting teachers have the opportunity to visit separately or together. They can count their “caring” whether or not they visit together and give the message. They can take appropriate action without being asked. They



## ACHIEVING THE MIRACULOUS

“When we strive with faith nothing wavering to fulfill the duties appointed to us, when we seek the inspiration of the Almighty in the performance of our responsibilities, we can achieve the miraculous.”

President Thomas S. Monson, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 91.

can actively seek, receive, and act on personal revelation to know how to respond to the spiritual and temporal needs of each sister they visit.

Rachel was expecting her first baby and had to remain in bed for most of her pregnancy. Her visiting teachers prayed for inspiration to know the best ways to help her. Maria, who lived nearby, was able to help at Rachel's home on most days before work. One day she cleaned part of the bathroom; the next day she cleaned the rest of it. Another day she vacuumed the living room, and the next day she made lunch for Rachel. And so her ongoing ministering continued as she did laundry, dusting, or whatever Rachel needed.

Gretchen phoned Rachel often to brighten her day. Sometimes they talked and laughed. Other times Gretchen and Maria visited with Rachel at her bedside and shared their testimonies, scripture reading, or the Visiting Teaching Message. And after Rachel's baby was born, they continued to help her.

Throughout this time, Maria and Gretchen also worked with the Relief Society presidency to coordinate other care Rachel and her family needed. The Relief Society presidency counseled with the bishop and the ward council so home teachers and others could provide additional assistance.

Ministering became sweeter as these sisters developed love for one another and as they shared spiritual experiences. As visiting teachers we can follow these same patterns and principles of ministering and receive the same blessings.



## Ministering as Christ Did

“As committed disciples of the Savior, we are improving in our ability to do the things He would do if He were here,” said Sister Beck. “We know that to Him it is our caring that counts, and so we are trying to concentrate on caring about our sisters rather than completing lists of things to do. True ministry is measured more by the depth of our charity than by the perfection of our statistics.”<sup>5</sup>

As visiting teachers we will know we are successful in our ministry when our sisters can say: “My visiting teachers help me grow spiritually. I know my visiting teachers care deeply about me and my family, and if I have problems, I know they will help me.” By following a higher path as visiting teachers, we are participating in the Lord's miraculous work and accomplishing the purposes of Relief Society to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need. ■

## NOTES

1. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 3.
2. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 7.
3. Julie B. Beck, “What I Hope My Granddaughters (and Grandsons) Will Understand about Relief Society,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 112.
4. See *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 123.
5. *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 112–13.

# HOW HAS VISITING TEACHING BEEN STRENGTHENED?

Following is a summary of the changes to the visiting teaching program. We encourage Relief Society leaders and visiting teachers to read chapter 9 of *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* to review the specific details of these changes. We also encourage you to read chapter 7 of *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* to gain vision, insight, and understanding of the power of ministering and its essential role in visiting teaching. (These two books can be found online at LDS.org.)

ASSIGNING VISITING TEACHERS	
1. The Relief Society presidency, not just the president, is responsible for visiting teachers.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.2.2.
2. When a Relief Society leader gives a sister her visiting teaching assignment, the leader helps the sister understand that visiting teaching is an important spiritual responsibility to fulfill.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5; 9.5.1.
3. The Relief Society presidency conducts ongoing training for visiting teachers on how to be more effective in ministering to those they visit. Training can be given in Relief Society on the first Sunday of the month or in another Relief Society meeting.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5.

COUNSELING WITH OTHERS	
1. The Relief Society presidency meets regularly with visiting teachers to discuss the spiritual and temporal welfare of those in need and to make plans to help them. Visiting teachers may assist the Relief Society presidency in coordinating short-term or long-term service for sisters in need.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.5; 9.5.1; 9.5.4.
2. The Relief Society presidency counsels together regularly to discuss the spiritual and temporal welfare of those in need.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.3.2; 9.5.4.
3. In ward or branch council meetings, the Relief Society president shares appropriate information from visiting teaching reports so that ward or branch leaders can counsel together on how to help those with spiritual and temporal needs.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 4.5.1; 5.1.2; 6.2.2.
4. The bishop or branch president may invite the Relief Society president to ward or branch priesthood executive committee (PEC) meetings as needed to coordinate home teaching and visiting teaching assignments.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.3.1.
5. The Relief Society presidency and the young single adult leader meet regularly to ensure that visiting teaching assignments help address the needs of young single adults.	See <i>Handbook 2</i> , 9.7.2; 16.3.3.

### ORGANIZING AND OVERSEEING VISITING TEACHING

<p>1. The bishop or branch president and the Relief Society presidency counsel together and prayerfully consider local needs to determine the structure of visiting teaching. (Sisters should not be organized in groups for the purpose of visiting teaching since they minister to individual needs.) The bishop or branch president approves each assignment.</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.2.</p>
<p>2. Where possible, the presidency assigns sisters in companionships of two. <i>Handbook 2</i> provides other options to meet local needs. The presidency counsels with the bishop or branch president about using the following options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Temporarily assigning only home teachers or only visiting teachers to certain families. Or leaders may alternate the monthly visits of home teachers and visiting teachers.</li> <li>b. Asking full-time sister missionaries to help with visiting teaching on a limited basis, with approval of the mission president.</li> </ol>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.2; 9.5.3.</p>
<p>3. Visiting teaching is not just a monthly visit; it is ministering. To watch over and strengthen sisters in their individual needs, visiting teachers have ongoing contact with them through visits, phone calls, e-mails, letters, or other means.</p> <p>Leaders give special priority to ensuring the following sisters are cared for: sisters coming into Relief Society from Young Women, single sisters, new members, recent converts, newly married sisters, less-active sisters, and those with special needs.</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.1; 9.5.2.</p>

### REPORTING VISITING TEACHING

<p>1. Visiting teachers are asked to report special needs and service given—in other words, their ministering. Count the caring instead of just counting visits.</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.4.</p>
<p>2. The Relief Society president gives the bishop or branch president a monthly visiting teaching report. This report includes the special needs and service rendered by visiting teachers and a list of sisters not contacted.</p>	<p>See <i>Handbook 2</i>, 9.5.4.</p>