

Ministering Principles

CAN I HELP SOMEONE CHANGE?



Yes. But your role may be different than you thought.

We were created with the capacity to change. Growing toward our divine potential is the purpose of our mortal experience. One of our ultimate goals in ministering is to help others come unto Christ and make the changes necessary to return to His presence. But because of their agency, our role in helping them to become more Christlike is limited.

Here are seven powerful lessons from the Savior on how we can help others in their efforts to change and become more like Him.

1. Don't Be Afraid to Invite Change

The Savior wasn't afraid to invite others to leave old ways behind and embrace His teachings. He invited Peter and James to leave their jobs and "become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). He invited the woman caught in adultery to "go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). He invited the rich young man to give up his attachment to worldly things and follow Him (see Mark 10:17–22). We too can be both bold and loving as we invite others to make changes and follow the Savior.



SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Send us your experiences as you have ministered to others or have been ministered to. Go to ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click “Submit an Article or Feedback.”

2. Remember It’s Their Choice to Change

The kind of change the Savior invites can’t be compelled. The Savior taught and invited, but He did not force. The rich young man “went away sorrowful” (Matthew 19:22). In Capernaum, many of His disciples chose to “go back,” and He asked the Twelve if they would also go away (see John 6:66–67). Some of John the Baptist’s followers chose to follow the Savior; others did not (see John 1:35–37; 10:40–42). We can invite others to become more like Him, but we cannot make the decision to change for them. And if they have not yet chosen to change, we shouldn’t give up—nor should we feel like we have failed.

3. Pray for Others’ Ability to Change

During His Intercessory Prayer, Jesus asked God that His disciples would be kept from evil, would become more like Him and the Father, and would be filled with God’s love (see John 17:11, 21–23, 26). And knowing that Peter would need strength in his efforts to grow into his role, the Savior prayed for him (see Luke 22:32). Our prayers for others can make a difference (see James 5:16).



4. Teach Them to Rely on His Power

It is only through the Savior that we can truly change and grow toward the divine potential we all have. He is “the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]” (John 14:6). It is His power that can “make weak things become strong” (Ether 12:27). It was faith in His atoning power that enabled Alma the Younger to change (see Alma 36:16–23). We can teach others to rely on the Savior so that they too can have His refining power in their lives.

5. Treat Them as They Can Become

Love and acceptance can be powerful agents of change. The woman at the well was living with a man who was not her husband. Jesus’s disciples “marvelled that he talked with the woman” (John 4:27), but Jesus

cared more about what she could become. He taught her and gave her the opportunity to change, which she did. (See John 4:4–42.)

When we treat others as they have been rather than as they can become, we can hold them back. Instead, we can forgive and forget past mistakes. We can believe that others can change. We can overlook weakness and point out the positive traits that they may not be able to see in themselves. “We have the responsibility to see individuals not as they are but rather as they can become.”¹

6. Let Them Go at Their Own Pace

Change takes time. We must all “continue in patience until [we] are perfected” (Doctrine and Covenants 67:13). Jesus had patience with others and

INVITATION TO ACT

What could you do this week to invite and support others in their efforts to change and become more like the Savior?



continued to teach even those who opposed Him, testifying of His role given Him by His Father and answering their questions (see Matthew 12:1–13; John 7:28–29). We can be patient with others and encourage them to be patient with themselves.

7. Don't Give Up If They Relapse into Old Ways

After Christ died, even Peter and some of the other Apostles went back to what they were familiar with (see John 21:3). Christ reminded Peter that he needed to “feed [His] sheep” (see John 21:15–17), and Peter returned to the ministry. It can be all too easy to return to former ways. We can continue to support with gentle encouragement and inspired invitations to continue to follow the Savior and strive to become more like Him.

Allow Others to Grow

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles tells this story about allowing others to grow: “I was told once of a young man who for many years was more or less the brunt of every joke in his school. He had some disadvantages, and it was easy for his peers to tease him. Later in his life he moved away. He eventually joined the army and had some successful experiences there in getting an education and generally stepping away from his past. Above all, as many in the military do, he discovered the beauty and majesty of the Church and became active and happy in it.

“Then, after several years, he returned to the town of his youth. Most of his generation had moved on but not all. Apparently, when he returned quite successful and quite reborn, the same old mind-set that had existed before was still there, waiting for his return. To the people in his hometown, he was still just old ‘so-and-so.’ . . .

“Little by little this man’s Pauline effort to leave that which was behind and grasp the prize that God had laid before him was gradually diminished until he died about the way he had lived in his youth. . . . Too bad, too sad that he was again to be surrounded by . . . those who thought his past was more interesting than his future. They managed to rip out of his grasp that for which Christ had grasped him. And he died sad, though through little fault of his own. . . .

“Let people repent. Let people grow. Believe that people can change and improve.”² ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “See Others as They May Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 70.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Best Is Yet to Be,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2010, 25–26.