

Ministering Principles

MINISTERING THROUGH FAMILY HISTORY

Helping someone with their family history is a powerful way to minister. As you connect others with their ancestors through family stories and details, you end up filling gaps in their hearts that they sometimes never knew they had (see Malachi 4:5–6).

Whether it's a lifetime Church member or someone who has never heard of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, all of God's children have a yearning to know about where they came from.

It often doesn't take long to leave a deep and lasting impression, as demonstrated in the following stories.





ILLUSTRATION BY JOSHUA DENNIS; BACKGROUND IMAGE AND CELL PHONE FROM GETTY IMAGES

Finding Family at 30,000 Feet

Recently on a flight home, I found myself next to Steve, who shared with me parts of his personal story. He had graduated from high school, entered the U.S. Army as a communications specialist at 18 years old, and soon began working at the White House, providing communications support to the President of the United States. From age 18 to 26, he served two U.S. Presidents. His stories were fascinating!

“Steve,” I said, “you have to write these stories down for your posterity! They need to have these stories firsthand from your perspective.” He agreed.

Then the Spirit prompted me to ask him what he knew about his ancestors. Steve knew plenty about his mother’s side, including a story of how his family had once eaten dinner with Abraham Lincoln while he had been campaigning through the countryside during the 1860 U.S. presidential election.

He knew very little about his father’s side, however. He really wanted to know more. I pulled out my phone and opened the FamilySearch app. “Steve, we can find your family right now!”

I connected to the in-flight Wi-Fi. I rested my phone on the tray table in front of me so we could both see. We searched FamilyTree. Within minutes we were both staring at his great-grandfather’s marriage certificate to his great-grandmother.

“That’s them!” he said. “I remember her last name now!”

The spirit of excitement poured over both of us. We worked on building profiles for his lesser-known ancestors for the next 45 minutes. He asked me to promise him that we



would continue searching together in Colorado. We exchanged contact information as the plane was landing.

Here we were, flying 30,000 feet (9,144 m) in the air, with a device as small as my hand, searching for a man and a woman married 100 years ago who had been lost to him and his family. Incredible! But we found them. Families were linked. Stories were remembered. Feelings of gratitude were felt for the technology and the tools. It was nothing short of a miracle.

Jonathan Petty, Colorado, USA

Recipe for Ministering

Ashley, a sister I minister to, and I both have cookbooks from our grandmothers. Hers is from her great-grandmother, and mine is a book I put together when I inherited my Grandma Greenwood's recipe box after she passed away.

Ashley and I both chose a recipe from our cookbooks, and we got together after work one night to try them out. She chose a blondie dessert recipe, so we made it first and put it in the oven. I chose "pink chip dip"—a staple at every Greenwood family party. Ashley's daughter Alice helped us taste test the food. Then, because Ashley didn't want her kids to eat all the blondies, she cut them up and delivered them to the sisters to whom she ministers.

The thing I loved most about our recipe night is that as we cooked and baked, we talked about all the regular ministering topics—her struggles and mine. But we also talked about our grandmothers and moms, which was tender for both of us.

Jenifer Greenwood, Utah, USA

Surrounded by New Family

Maria had been less active for more than 20 years. A few months ago, we spent a couple of hours with her in our home, exploring her family through census and other records. At one point she burst into tears exclaiming, "I've learned more about my family in two hours than I've known in my whole life!"

At the end of our time together, we introduced to her the Relatives Around Me feature of the FamilyTree app. It turned out that my husband and I both are distantly related to Maria. She burst into tears again, saying she had thought she was alone. She never knew she had family in the area. A few weeks later Maria met with our bishop. She is now working on preparing for the temple, and she has met many "new" cousins in our ward!

Carol Riner Everett, North Carolina, USA



Specific Ways to Help

Family history can open doors for ministering opportunities when it seems like nothing else will. Here are a few ideas you might try.

- Help them upload family photos to FamilySearch.
- Help them record and upload audio recordings of family history stories, especially ones that match photos.
- Create a fan chart or other printable family history document that you can give as a gift.
- Teach ways to capture their own history through keeping a journal in a way they enjoy. Audio journal? Photo journal? Video logs? There are many options for those who don't prefer standard journal formats.
- Go to the temple together to do ordinances for ancestors. Or offer to do ordinances for their family names if they have more than they can handle.
- Get together to share family traditions.
- Take a family history class together.
- Find other ideas at [ministering.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/ministering) > Family History Activities > In-Home Activities. ■



INVITATION TO ACT

Consider those you minister to. How could you use family history to bless their lives?

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Send us your experiences as you have ministered to others or have been ministered to. Go to [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.churchofjesuschrist.org) and click "Submit an Article or Feedback."