





**By Elder
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A Holier Pattern of SERVICE

May we follow the living Christ ever more willingly, ever more effectively, as we strive to become His true disciples through ministering as He would.

When I was 15 or 16, I was deeply self-absorbed and, like many of us in our adolescence, unsettled, uncertain, and vulnerable. I felt lost, self-conscious, and awkward. It didn't help that my parents lived far away in Saudi Arabia while I was at boarding school on a desolate bit of coast in England. In terms of the school, Hogwarts with Snape would have been more welcoming.

Bad weather was common along that coast, but one winter a particularly formidable storm blew in across the Irish Sea with hurricane-force winds. Around 5,000 homes were flooded, food was running out, and people were left cut off without electricity or any means of heating and lighting their homes.

As the flood started to subside, we were dispatched by the school to help with cleaning up. I was astonished to experience such a natural disaster close up. Water and mud were everywhere. The faces of those whose homes had been flooded were ashen and gaunt. They hadn't slept in days. My fellow schoolboys and I went to work, moving waterlogged belongings to upper floors and pulling up ruined carpet.

But what struck me most was the camaraderie that developed. There was just a wonderful, good-natured feeling among people united in a worthy cause under challenging circumstances. I later reflected that all those insecure feelings that usually consumed my teenage thoughts left while I was involved in this great effort to assist our neighbors.



The discovery that helping others was the antidote to my gloomy, self-obsessed state should have been transforming. But it wasn't, because the discovery didn't sink deep enough, and I failed to reflect more thoughtfully on what had taken place. That understanding came later.

The Invitation to Minister

I was considering this during the April 2018 general conference as I heard the repeated call to minister as the Savior ministers—and to do so out of love, in recognition that we all are children of our Heavenly Father.

We will serve not because our service is being counted and measured but because we love our Father in Heaven and are motivated by a higher and nobler pursuit—helping our friends find and stay on the path home to Him. We are loving and serving our neighbors as Jesus would if He were in our place, truly trying to improve people's lives and lighten their burdens. This is where joy and lasting fulfillment come from, for both the giver and the receiver, as we share the fruits of knowing and feeling our infinite worth and God's eternal love for each of us.

"A hallmark of the Lord's true and living Church will always be an organized, directed effort to minister to individual children of God and their families," said President Russell M. Nelson. "Because it is His Church, we as His servants will minister to the one, just as He did. We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving-kindness."¹

I know that if we heed this call to minister, we can rise out of ourselves; grow in faith, confidence, and happiness; and overcome our self-focus and the sense of emptiness and gloom that come with it.

Ministering Transforms Us

The beauty of this kind of ministering is that it helps others, but it also transforms us by taking us away from our worries, fears, anxieties, and doubts. At first, serving others may simply distract us from our own

problems, but that swiftly grows into something much higher and more beautiful. We begin to experience light and peace, almost without realizing it. We are calmed, warmed, and comforted. And we recognize a joy that comes in no other way.

As President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained: "The abundant life noted in the scriptures is the spiritual sum that is arrived at by the multiplying of our service to others and by investing our talents in service to God and to man." He added, "We become more substantive as we serve others—indeed, it is easier to 'find' ourselves because there is so much more of us to find!"²

A Call from the Master

When the Savior called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him, their change of direction and focus was instant: "They straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matthew 4:20).

But after the Savior had been taken from them in the cruelest way, they returned to their fishing, to what they felt they knew. On one occasion, the resurrected Savior came to them as they fished in vain.

"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:6).

This was not only a demonstration that He had lost none of His power but also a bold picture that they were looking in the wrong place and focusing on the wrong thing. As they ate fish together on the shore, the Savior asked Peter three times if he loved Him. Each time with growing anxiety, Peter answered that he did. Following each of Peter's answers, Jesus asked Peter to feed His sheep. (See John 21:15–17.)

Why did the Savior ask Peter three times if he loved Him? Peter had been called to follow Jesus before, and he had responded instantly, leaving his fishing behind. But when Jesus was taken from them, Peter grieved; he was lost. He returned to the only thing he felt he knew—fishing. Now Jesus wanted Peter to really hear Him and to comprehend the gravity of the invitation this time. He needed Peter to understand what it meant to be a disciple of the resurrected Christ now that He would no longer be physically by their side.

What did the Lord want from Peter? He wanted Peter to feed His sheep, His lambs. This was the job that needed doing. Peter recognized this gentle, direct call from his Master, and the chief Apostle responded, valiantly and fearlessly giving the remainder of his life to the ministry he had been called to.

Begin with Prayer

We have another chief Apostle on earth today. President Nelson is extending the invitation to you and me to feed Jesus's sheep. With all the distractions around us and so many lesser things demanding our attention, the challenge is to *respond* to this invitation and *act*—actually do something, really make a change, and live differently.

Your question now might be, “Where do I start?”

Begin with prayer. President Nelson has challenged us to “stretch beyond [our] current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation.”³ Ask your Father in Heaven what you might do and for whom. Respond to any impression you receive, however insignificant it might seem. Act on it. Any small act of kindness causes us to look outward and brings its own blessings. It could be a kind, unexpected text to someone. Perhaps it's a flower, some cookies, or a kind word. Maybe it's clearing a garden or yard, doing some laundry, washing a car, cutting grass, clearing snow, or just listening.

As Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, has said: “Sometimes we think we have to do something grand and heroic to ‘count’ as serving our neighbors. Yet simple acts of service can have profound effects on others—as well as on ourselves.”⁴



You might be reluctant to take the first step, convinced that you don't have time or that you can't really make a difference, but you will be amazed at what even some little thing can do. President Nelson has set out a higher and holier pattern of service for you and me. When we respond, we will discover how fulfilling, liberating, and calming it is for us and how we can be an agent for change and comfort in the lives of others.

At times, such as after completing a mission, we may be tempted to say, "Well, I did it. Let someone else serve. I want a break." But true ministering doesn't pause. It's a way of life. We might take breaks from our regular activities and holidays to rest and rejuvenate, but our covenant responsibility to love one another as He has loved us and to feed His sheep doesn't take a break.

Ministry of the Worldwide Church

I am so proud to belong to a Church that puts ministering into practice. In 2017 alone, our members donated over 7 million voluntary hours growing, harvesting, and distributing food for the poor and the needy. The Church provided clean water for half a million people and wheelchairs



for 49,000 people in 41 countries. Volunteers provided glasses and ophthalmological services, and they trained 97,000 caregivers for those with sight challenges in 40 countries. Thirty-three thousand caregivers were trained in maternal and newborn care in 38 countries. Not to mention Helping Hands, through which hundreds of thousands of our people have donated millions of hours in recent years. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ jump to help those affected by disasters big and small, as well as improve their neighborhoods and communities.

The Church's budding JustServe initiative, which lists service opportunities, already has over 350,000 registered volunteers, who have contributed millions of hours helping in their local communities.⁵

This is a Church of action. This is what we do. This is what you do. Let this be a defining characteristic of who you are.

Three Kinds of Service

I would like to highlight three broad kinds of service we each have the opportunity to engage in.

1. Service that we are assigned or invited to perform as a responsibility at church. We will strive for the kind of ministry that is treasured, not measured, where we think about, pray for, and help those we have been given the responsibility to care for.

2. Service we choose to do of our own volition. This is an expansion of the first, which will flow into all our daily actions and interactions as we more consciously seek to forget ourselves and turn outward toward others. There is no formal assignment, but we are motivated by a desire to follow Christ, starting by being more kind and considerate to those around us.



3. Public service. Where appropriate, involve yourself in politics with an eye on service and on building individuals and communities. Avoid the political tribalism that has become so polarized, strident, and destructive across communities, countries, and continents. Join other politicians who are finding common cause to bring healing to troubled lives in their own jurisdiction and beyond. You can be a voice of balance and reason, advocating fairness in all corners of society. There is a growing need for you to contribute your energy to this kind of worthy civic engagement.

We Can Change Our Own World

When we read the news, we might feel that the world is sliding away. If each of us acts in ways big and small each day, we can change our own world and that of those around us. As you serve your neighbor and serve *with* your neighbor in your community, you will make friends who share your desire to help. These will become strong friendships, building bridges across cultures and belief.

If you will respond to the invitation to minister as Jesus does, you will be transformed, becoming ever more selfless. You will discover

the joy that comes from ministering in the Savior's way, leaving behind your anxieties and uncertainties and the gloom that comes from your perceived inadequacies.

Perhaps a name or a cause has come to mind. This is likely an invitation from the Spirit, and perhaps you have received it before. Reach out, look out, and lift up. Choose to respond to this invitation, and pray today to know what you can do. When you see and feel the blessings this brings to you and those you minister to, you will want to make this a daily pattern.

Our highest and best endeavor is to share the light, hope, joy, and purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ with all of God's children and help them find the path home. Helping, serving, and ministering to them are manifestations of the gospel in action. As we make this a way of life, we will discover that it is uniquely fulfilling, and it is how we can find the peace and joy which may have eluded us.

This is how the Savior lived, and this is why He lived—to provide the perfect balm and the ultimate healing through His great, infinite, atoning gift for you and for me. May we follow the living Christ ever more willingly, ever more effectively, as we strive to become His true disciples through ministering as He would. ■

From a worldwide devotional for young adults, "A Hallmark of the Lord's True and Living Church," delivered at Brigham Young University—Idaho on May 6, 2018.

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Ministering with the Power and Authority of God," *Ensign*, May 2018, 69.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Abundant Life," *Ensign*, July 1978, 3.
3. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018, 95.
4. Jean B. Bingham, "Ministering as the Savior Does," *Ensign*, May 2018, 104.
5. See JustServe.org. It is available in North America and is being tested in Mexico, the United Kingdom, Puerto Rico, and Australia.