

Ministering

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Let us reach out and care as our Savior would, especially to those whom we are privileged by love and assignment to minister.

Dear brothers and sisters, friends, welcome to general conference!

After general conference last October, Sister Gong and I walked through the Conference Center to say hello and to hear your gospel experiences.

Our members from Mexico said, “Hoy es el tiempo de México.”

We learned Gilly and Mary are friends from England. When Mary joined the Church, she lost her place to live. Gilly generously invited Mary to come live with her. Full of faith, Gilly says, “I’ve never doubted the Lord is with me.” At conference, Gilly also had a joyful reunion with the sister missionary who taught her 47 years ago.

Jeff and his wife, Melissa, were attending general conference for his first time. Jeff played professional baseball (he was a catcher) and is now a physician anesthesiologist. He told me, “Much to my surprise, I am moving toward baptism because it feels like the most authentic and honest way to live.”

Earlier, Melissa had apologized to Jeff’s assigned ministering brother, “Jeff does not want ‘white shirts’ in our house.” The ministering brother said, “I’ll find a way.” Now he and Jeff are good friends. At Jeff’s baptism, I met a congregation of Latter-day Saints whom Jeff, Melissa, and their daughter, Charlotte, love.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to minister to others as He would because lives are waiting to change.

When Peggy told me her husband, John, after 31 years of marriage, was going to be baptized, I asked what had changed.

Peggy said, “John and I were studying the New Testament *Come, Follow Me*, and John asked about Church doctrine.”

Peggy said, “Let’s invite the missionaries.”

John said, “No missionaries—unless my friend can come.” Over 10 years, John’s ministering brother had become his trusted friend. (I thought, What if John’s ministering brother had stopped coming after one, two, or nine years?)

John listened. He read the Book of Mormon with real intent. When the missionaries invited John to be baptized, he said yes. Peggy said, “I fell off my chair and started to cry.”

John said, “I changed as I drew closer to the Lord.” Later, John and Peggy were sealed in the holy temple. Last December, John passed away at age 92. Peggy says, “John was always a good person, but he became different in a beautiful way after he was baptized.”

Sister Gong and I met Meb and Jenny by video during the COVID pandemic. (We met many wonderful couples and individuals by video during COVID, each prayerfully introduced by their stake president.)

Meb and Jenny humbly said concerns in their lives made them wonder if their temple marriage could be saved and, if so, how. They believed Jesus Christ’s Atonement and their covenant commitments could help them.

Imagine my joy when Meb and Jenny received new temple recommends and returned together to the house of the Lord. Later Meb almost died. What a blessing Meb and Jenny have restored covenant relationships with the Lord and each other and feel the ministering love of many around them.

Everywhere I go, I gratefully learn from those who minister and care as our Savior would.

In Peru, Sister Gong and I met Salvador and his siblings.¹ Salvador and his siblings are orphans. It was Salvador’s birthday. The Church leaders and members who faithfully minister to this family inspire me. “Pure religion and undefiled ... is this, To visit the fatherless and widows,”² “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, ... strengthen the feeble knees.”³

In Hong Kong, an elders quorum president modestly shares how their quorum consistently conducts 100-percent ministering interviews. “We prayerfully organize companionships so everyone can care for someone and be cared for,” he says. “We regularly ask each companionship about those for whom they minister. We do not check boxes; we minister to the ministers who care for our people.”

In Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, President Bokolo shares how he and his family joined the Church in France. One day, as he was reading his patriarchal blessing, the Spirit inspired Brother

Bokolo to return with his family to the DR Congo. Brother Bokolo knew they would face many challenges if they returned. And their church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was not yet established in Kinshasa.

Yet, in faith, as have many others, the Bokolos followed the Lord's Spirit. In Kinshasa, they ministered to and blessed those around them, overcame challenges, received spiritual and temporal blessings. Today, they rejoice in having a house of the Lord in their country.⁴

A convert was ministered to by personal example. As a young man, he said he spent his days lounging at the beach. One day, he said, "I saw an attractive girl in a modest swimsuit." Amazed, he went to ask why such an attractive girl would wear such a modest swimsuit. She was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and asked with a smile, "Would you like to come to church Sunday?" He said yes.

Years ago, while we were on an assignment together, Elder L. Tom Perry shared how he and his companion regularly ministered to a sister who lived alone in a rough Boston neighborhood. When Elder Perry and his companion arrived, the sister cautiously directed, "Slide your temple recommends under the door." Only after seeing the temple recommends would she unbolt multiple locks and open the door.⁵ Of course, I am not saying ministering companionships need temple recommends. But I love the thought that as those who honor covenants minister, homes unlock and hearts open.

Elder Perry also offered practical advice. He said, "Give companionships a reasonable number of assignments, prayerfully chosen, clustered geographically where appropriate so travel time is used well." He would counsel, "Start with those who most need visits. Build from those most likely to welcome and respond well to visits." He concluded, "Faithful consistency brings miracles."

Higher and holier ministering⁶ comes when we pray for "the pure love of Christ"⁷ and follow the Spirit. It also comes as elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies, under the bishop's direction, oversee ministering efforts, including assigning ministering companionships. Please give our young men and young women needed opportunity to accompany and be mentored by experienced ministering brothers and sisters. And please let our young rising generation inspire ministering brother and sister companions.

In some places in the Church, we have a ministering gap. More say they are ministering than say they are being ministered to. We do not want checklist concern. But often we need more than a sincere hello in the hall or a casual "Can I help you?" in the parking lot. In many places, we can reach out, understand others where they are, and build

relationships when we regularly visit members in their homes. Inspired invitations change lives. When invitations help us make and keep sacred covenants, we draw closer to the Lord and each other.

It is said that those who understand the true spirit of ministering do more than before, while those who do not understand do less. Let's do more, as our Savior would. As our hymn says, it is "a blessing of duty and love."⁸

Ward councils, elders quorums, and Relief Societies, please hearken to the Good Shepherd and help Him "seek that which was lost, ... bring again that which was driven away, ... bind up that which was broken, ... strengthen that which was sick."⁹ We may entertain "angels unawares"¹⁰ as we make room in His inn for all.¹¹

Inspired ministering blesses families and individuals; it also strengthens wards and branches. Think of your ward or branch as a spiritual ecosystem. In the spirit of the Book of Mormon allegory of the olive trees, the Lord of the vineyard and his servants bring forth precious fruit and strengthen each tree by binding together the strengths and weaknesses of all the trees.¹² The Lord of the vineyard and his servants repeatedly ask, "What more can I do?"¹³ Together, they bless hearts and homes, wards and branches, through inspired, consistent ministering.¹⁴

Ministering—shepherding—makes our vineyard "one body"¹⁵—a sacred grove. Each tree in our grove is a living family tree. Roots and branches intertwine. Ministering blesses generations. When service is needed, wise bishops and elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies ask, "Who are the ministering brothers and sisters?" Ward councils and ministering interviews ask not only about challenges or problems but also look with eyes to see and rejoice in the Lord's many tender mercies in our lives as we minister as He would.

Our Savior is our perfect example.¹⁶ Because He is good, He can go about doing good.¹⁷ He blesses the one and the 99. He is ministering personified. We become more like Jesus Christ when we do "unto ... the least of these" as we would unto Him,¹⁸ when we love our neighbor as ourselves,¹⁹ when we "love one another; as I have loved you,"²⁰ and when "whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."²¹

Jesus Christ ministers. Angels minister.²² Followers of Jesus Christ "minister one to another,"²³ "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep,"²⁴ "watch over [and] ... nourish [the people] with things pertaining to righteousness,"²⁵ "remember ... the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted,"²⁶ let His name be known through our ministry.²⁷ As we minister as He would, we witness His miracles, His blessings.²⁸ We obtain "a more excellent ministry."²⁹

We may tire physically. But in His service we do “not weary in well-doing.”³⁰ We diligently do our best, do not run faster than we have strength,³¹ but trust, as the Apostle Paul teaches, that “God loveth a cheerful giver.”³² For God who “ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown.”³³ In other words, God enriches “every thing to all bountifulness.”³⁴ They “which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”³⁵

Wherever we are in this Easter season, let us reach out and care as our Savior would, especially to those whom we are privileged by love and assignment to minister. In so doing, may we draw closer to Jesus Christ and each other, becoming more like Him and the followers of Jesus Christ He would have us each be. In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Sister Gong and I joined together with Elder Enrique and Sister Ruth Falabella for this visit. Salvador and his siblings are now older than these earlier photos but are still part of a caring community of brothers and sisters who minister with faithful kindness.
2. James 1:27.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. The photo of President Bokolo and his family dates to when Sister Gong and I met them.
5. See L. Tom Perry, “Strive to Be Temple Worthy” (Ricks College devotional, Sept. 19, 1989), byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 100.
7. See Moroni 7:47–48; see also verses 4–8.
8. “Have I Done Any Good?,” *Hymns*, no. 223.
9. Ezekiel 34:16. In Ezekiel 34, the Lord also sternly warns the shepherds of Israel of the consequences when the sheep are not tended or fed.
10. Hebrews 13:2.
11. See Luke 2:7; 10:33–34.

12. This theme appears throughout Jacob 5, including in verses 17–18, 20, 24, 75. Verse 28 reminds us, “And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did nourish *all* the fruit of the vineyard” (emphasis added).
13. The Lord of the vineyard asks twice, “What could I have done more *for* my vineyard?” (Jacob 5:41, 49; emphasis added) and once, “What could I have done more *in* my vineyard?” (Jacob 5:47; emphasis added).
14. In the spirit of Mosiah 18:21 and Matthew 25:40.
15. See Jacob 5:74: “And they became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal”; see also, for example, 1 Corinthians 12:12: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”
16. The scriptures are replete with examples of how our Savior ministers. For example, amidst the pressing throng, He is present in the moment when the woman touches the hem of His garment, and He feels healing flow to her (see Mark 5:24–34). Or, with “no leisure so much as to eat” (Mark 6:31), Jesus and His disciples are physically tired and seeking a place to rest. Yet, seeing the multitude without a shepherd, our Savior heals, teaches, feeds them. He gathers basketfuls of loaves and fishes afterward (see Mark 6:31–44).
17. See Acts 10:38.
18. See Matthew 25:35–40.
19. See Mark 12:31.
20. John 13:34.
21. Matthew 20:26; see also Luke 22:26–27.
22. See, for example, Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:42–44; Acts 10:1–7; 12:5–11; 2 Nephi 32:3; Moroni 7:22, 29–30.
23. 3 Nephi 26:19.
24. Romans 12:15; see also Mosiah 18:9.
25. Mosiah 23:18.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
27. See Abraham 1:19.

28. Acts 26:16 speaks of becoming “a minister and a witness” of the things of the Lord.
29. Hebrews 8:6.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33; see also Alma 37:34.
31. See Mosiah 4:27.
32. 2 Corinthians 9:7.
33. 2 Corinthians 9:10.
34. 2 Corinthians 9:11.
35. 2 Corinthians 9:6.