

What does it mean to be a minister?
President Pray
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We recently had the privilege of receiving training for Youth Leaders hosted by Sister Craven and Sister Jackman from the General Young Women's Presidency. During part of the presentation they shared a touching video depicting the Savior's visit to the Nephites featuring his healing of the sick. As I watched the Savior touch individuals who gathered to worship him and look into their eyes, I was struck by the wonderful assurance that he was connecting to each one of them individually and was ministering to them according to their specific needs. I felt a powerful spirit of love and appreciation for Jesus Christ, the shepherd, who knows the individual sheep and is known of them.

A couple of years ago as I was reading the account of the Savior's visit to the Nephites in 3rd Nephi in the Book of Mormon. In 3 Nephi 17:25 we find that there were 2,500 people who initially gathered to see the Savior. In chapter 11 we are told that Jesus invited the people to come forth and thrust their hands into his side and feel of the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet. "...and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth."

I have read this account many times in my life and have always envisioned this being a small and quick part of the Savior's visit. For some reason, this time, I started thinking about how much time all of this would actually have taken. If it had taken only 15 seconds for each person to thrust their hands into his side and feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet, the whole process would have taken about 10 hours and 45 minutes. It was so important to Jesus that he connect with each person, individually and that each person receive a witness of His Divinity and Resurrection.

In chapter 17, Jesus asked that the sick and those with afflictions of any kind be brought forth "...and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him." Now, I don't have any way to know how many people were sick or had afflictions but if it were 10%, or 250, and he took as little as 30 seconds apiece with them, it would have taken 2 hours for these healings to occur. Remember, he did "heal them every one as they were brought forth." He didn't do a mass healing. He connected with the individual and healed the individual.

Also in chapter 17 is the account of the instance when "...he took their little children one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them." If 21% of the people were Primary aged children as in our stake that would have been about 525 children that he blessed one by one and prayed unto the Father for them one by one. I can't imagine that it would have been this quick, but if that took 30 seconds each, he would have blessed and prayed for children for 4.5 hours.

Aren't those three examples of ministry by the Savior and amazing example of love and a commitment to a connection with and a lifting of the individual. It is unmistakable. It is a perfect model of one by one ministry.

As I reflect on many of the examples of the Savior's ministry in the New Testament, I am struck by how often he is ministering to individuals and small groups of people. These are so personal and so poignant; so powerful. The woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, Zacharias, the rich young man, healing the blind man, causing the lame to walk. He taught his small group of apostles and spent time with them. He ministered to his mother and other family members. He caused Lazarus to rise from the dead.

Indeed, we are taught that Jesus went about doing good. Much of the good he did was to model for us how to live the two great commandments. When asked by a certain lawyer, which was the greatest of the commandments, Jesus taught this great truth:

³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.

³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:36-40)

I love that Jesus said that the first commandment was “like unto” the first one. In other words, Jesus taught that loving our neighbor was like loving God. He also made it very individual and personal. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. In other words, elevate other individuals to the same love and treatment we have for ourselves. Do unto them as we would be done to. Care about them, their welfare, their safety, their comfort, their needs, their spirits, etc.

He also pointed out that the position in the hierarchy of commandments (if there is such a thing) of these two commandments is at the top. “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Everything else to do with commandments, council, prophecy, etc. is to support loving God and loving our neighbor. That is an interesting perspective to contemplate. Is it possible that this could change some of our focus and re-order our priorities as we compare how we are doing it to how Jesus said we should be doing it?

Brothers and Sisters, these teachings and examples that Jesus has shared are at the core of what it means to minister to one another. Ministry is not an assignment it is a state of mind. It is the essence of what relationships look like when we are truly loving one another and caring for each other as we would like to be cared for ourselves. It’s about friendship, companionship, mourning with those that mourn and giving comfort to those who stand in need of comfort.

In the Sacrament prayers, we are reminded of the covenant we make at baptism and reiterate in all successive covenants we make, that is to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. What does that mean? It means many things and one thing it means is that we declare ourselves to be disciples and followers of Jesus. What do followers of Jesus do? They do what they have seen Him do. And what did he do? He lived and lives the two great commandments. He loves God and He loves His neighbor as himself. In fact, he might even love his neighbor more than himself as evidenced by giving his life for His children.

Elder Christofferson said that early in his apostolic ministry, he felt overwhelmed by perceived expectations. But then he received a simple message from the Lord: “Forget about yourself and what people may think of you, whether they are impressed or disappointed or anything else. Just focus on what I want to give them through you. Focus on what I want them to hear through you.” Ensign, July 2019, “We Are Witnesses: The Twelve Apostles Today”, page 17.

Wouldn't that be a great way to be a disciple of Jesus and to love our neighbors and minister to them as he did? What would our lives look like if we got up every day and asked ourselves three questions in relation to our families and our neighbors:

What would Jesus do if he were here?

What does Jesus want to give them through me?

What does Jesus want them to hear and feel through me?

Brothers and Sisters, it is my testimony that Jesus lives and that he loves us individually and personally. He knows us and wants us to know Him. He has made so many sacrifices for us and has shown his love for us in so many tangible ways. As we strive to follow in his footsteps, may we love our neighbors and find joy in ministering to them as Jesus does.

In the name of Jesus Christ—Amen

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