

Watchcare and Ministering through Visiting Teaching

"Charity [means] far more than a feeling of benevolence," taught President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency. "Charity is born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and is an effect of His Atonement." For Relief Society sisters, visiting teaching can be charity in action, an important way to exercise our faith in the Savior.

Through visiting teaching, we provide watchcare by contacting each sister, sharing a gospel message, and seeking to know her and her family's needs. "Visiting teaching becomes the Lord's work when our focus is on people rather than percentages," explains Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president. "In reality, visiting teaching is never finished. It is more a way of life than a task. Faithfully serving as a visiting teacher is evidence of our discipleship."

As we provide consistent and prayerful watchcare, we learn how to best minister to and meet the needs of each sister and her family. Ministering can take many forms—some large and some not so large. "Often small acts of service are all that is required to lift and bless another: a question concerning a person's family, quick words of encouragement, a sincere compliment, a small note of thanks, a brief telephone call," taught President Thomas S. Monson. "If we are observant and aware, and if we act on the promptings which come to us, we can accomplish much good. ... Countless are the acts of service provided by the vast army of Relief Society visiting teachers."

From Our History

In 1843, Church members in Nauvoo, Illinois, were divided into four wards. In July of that year, Relief Society leaders appointed a visiting committee of four sisters for each ward. The visiting committees' responsibilities included assessing needs and collecting donations. The Relief Society used these donations to provide for the needy.

While visiting teachers no longer collect donations, they do retain the responsibility to assess needs—spiritual and temporal—and to work to meet those needs. Eliza R. Snow (1804–87), second Relief Society general president, explained: "A teacher ... should surely have so much of the Spirit of the Lord, as she enters a house to know what spirit she meets in there. ... Plead before God and the Holy Ghost to get [the Spirit] so that you will be able to meet that spirit that prevails in that house ... and you may feel to talk words of peace and comfort, and if you find a sister feeling cold, take her to your heart as you would a child to your bosom and warm [her] up."

From the Scriptures

John 13:15, 34–35; 21:15; Mosiah 2:17; Doctrine and Covenants 81:5; Moses 1:39

