

## *“The Needs Before Us”*

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Welcome! Thank you for choosing to spend your time at BYU Women’s Conference. I pray that we will learn about the theme of the conference, and learn how to strengthen one another in the Lord. Thank you to my friends and family for their support. And thank you to my new friend, Jacky. She is truly a woman of faith and strength.

This has been quite the journey to prepare for this assignment. I am so thankful for the opportunity that I have had to study, pray and be tutored by the Lord. I have tried to have eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart to know the will of the Lord. This past month I have experienced some up close and personal life experiences that have taught me in a more profound way about the *Needs Before Us*.

One of my up close and personal experiences has been with my brother David. David has struggled physically, mentally, and spiritually through his mortal journey. His physical challenges began as an infant, which included being on oxygen until he was 5 years old. Those physical challenges continued and at age 20, he was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. David also struggled spiritually. Many of his choices led him down a path further away from the Lord.

In the recent months his health declined significantly and his kidneys were failing, making dialysis necessary. As I watched him struggle through this challenge, oh how I wished I could have changed the reality of his suffering. I told him that I was praying for him and I knew the Lord was aware of him and his needs. The miracle in this experience is that I saw my brother’s heart changing. He told me he had been praying again lately. I reminded him that those prayers were heard by our loving Heavenly Father and to keep it up. I was able to drive him to some of his doctors appointments and I would have the chance to express my love and the love of our Heavenly Father to him. I wanted to do so much more but felt helpless, but the Lord taught and reminded me: what your brother needs is simple...just love him. Minister to his need to be cared for. David did know I was a phone call, text or visit away. He knew I cared. I wish I could have more drives, lunch dates and talks with my brother, but Heavenly Father took him home in his loving arms quickly, just a few weeks ago.

Through my sorrow, I have been reminded again and again that the Lord knows each one of us and our needs. And it is through the love and strength we receive from the Lord and the love and strength of others that those needs are met.

So many have met my need to be comforted through their words and deeds of kindness.

President Thomas S. Monson taught us through his example how to show love and kindness. He said, “My brothers and sisters, we are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.”<sup>i</sup>

I have been dependent on the Lord to strengthen me through this experience with my brother and he has been dependent upon me to learn in a personal way about how to meet the needs before us and master our ministering.

There is a real art and science to making good bread. I would say I’m a bit of a bread enthusiast. Just ask my family, a meal isn’t complete without bread on the menu. I also find great satisfaction and enjoyment in making bread and sharing that yummy goodness with others.

Most breads are made by varying simple ingredients like flour, water, salt and, of course, yeast. Yeast, being the live ingredient in bread making, determines whether or not your dough will rise. Kneading is important in bread making because it is how the gluten is formed and developed. It gives the dough strength and structure and determines whether the end result of your bread is light and fluffy, or flat and tough.

There are many who have mastered the art of bread making. They have learned the techniques, then applied those by practicing over and over again.

My dear friend, Bette Ann has mastered her bread skills, I know because I have been a recipient of many of her delicious breads. My mother has also blessed my life with her mastery in bread making. Growing up, I would come home from school to the smell of homemade bread. She applied her bread making techniques over and over because she had to feed myself and seven brothers. Cinnamon rolls were one of my favorite bread treats to come home to.

Kneading is important in bread making; needing one another is important to grow and develop as true disciples of Christ. We need each other. As we love another and meet the needs of one another, we are strengthened and our lives develop and grow in Christ-like ways. Yeast is the active ingredient in bread for dough to rise. Rising to true discipleship and mastering our ministering requires pure, genuine love. Love is the motivator for action; the kind of love that our master teacher exemplified and taught.

Our Savior taught us the techniques of meeting the needs of others through His example of how he lived His life, one daily small and simple act at a time with the active ingredient of pure love. He went about doing good continually. This is our Master’s work that we are about.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught that Jesus Christ gave himself for His followers, “He was ever conscious of doing what was right and of meeting the real and true needs of those he served.”<sup>ii</sup> “He put himself and His own needs second and ministered to others beyond the call of duty, tirelessly, lovingly, effectively.”<sup>iii</sup> “The more we understand what really happened in the life of Jesus of Nazareth in Gethsemane and on Calvary, the better able we will be to understand the importance of sacrifice and selflessness in our lives.”<sup>iv</sup>

How grateful I am for the Saviors’ atonement, which is the ultimate expression of pure love for each one of us.

As we learn of and draw closer to our Master, we will feel His love and know that He knows each of our hearts. As we feel His love, we understand and know he depends upon and needs us in HIS work. I believe the more we feel His love and the more we love Him, the greater power we can have to become more like Him in our loving ministry. We can learn to see others as Christ sees them. What a divine gift, to see others as Christ sees them. A gift that we can seek after.

How do we know how to meet the needs before us and master our ministering? I believe that the Savior taught us in Matthew when He spoke of seeing with our eyes, hearing with our ears<sup>v</sup> and understanding with our hearts.

### **Eyes to See, Ears to Hear**

Seeing can take place with our eyes, visually, AND our hearts. To see with our eyes is to discern. To be aware and notice those around us. To focus on the one the Lord wants us to see and what their true needs are. To see with our hearts is to have compassion and a curiosity for caring. To be interested in the person in need and get, what I call, “up close and personal.”

Jeffrey R. Holland taught how we should be “deeply committed to heartfelt care for one another, motivated only by the pure love of Christ to do so.”<sup>vi</sup>

I was reading a post on the official Instagram account of the church and a thought that was shared by Chelsea was “MOVE IN CLOSER.” If you’re having a hard time understanding or loving someone...move in closer.

Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson reminded us that quite often those that need us most are those closest to us.<sup>vii</sup> Heavenly Father may have placed those who need us closest to us, knowing that we are best suited to meet their needs.

I love the words to a song “Not too Far From Here” by Hillary Weeks. Here are just a few of the words:

*Somebody's down to their last dime  
Somebody's running out of time  
Somebody's got nowhere else to go  
Somebody needs a little hope  
Not too far from here*

*And I may not know their name  
But I'm praying just the same  
That You'll use me Lord to wipe away a tear  
Cause somebody's crying  
Not too far from here*

*Someone is waiting not too far from here.*<sup>viii</sup>

The someones that need us are out there waiting for us to see them. As we see them, we can meet their needs through small and simple acts of love and kindness.

“By small and simple things are great things brought to pass.”<sup>xix</sup> The size of our service is not what matters, it’s the giving with love that matters. The Lord can help magnify all of our offerings into something greater.

Our simple acts can be spoken or unspoken gifts of love. Our spoken or written words can calm and encourage, strengthen and praise, express love and can call down the powers of heaven through our prayers. Unspoken acts can speak volumes too. Holding a hand, a listening ear, your time, a warm handshake or a simple smile. I love this example that Elder Marvin J. Ashton related, that “during a meeting a woman seated behind him passed him a note. It simply said, ‘Would you please turn around and look at me?’ Then he said, ‘Everyone needs to be looked at.’”<sup>xx</sup>

Ears to hear can help in our ministering and meeting the needs of others. Ears to hear the word of the Lord through the scriptures and our inspired leaders. We have had the privilege to hear from our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, who taught us about the guidance of the Spirit and how it can help us in our lives and in our service. He said, “The privilege of receiving revelation is one of the greatest gifts of God to His children. Through the manifestations of the Holy Ghost the Lord will assist us in all our righteous pursuits...If we will truly receive the Holy Ghost and learn to discern and understand his promptings, we will be guided in matters large and small.”<sup>xxi</sup>

Ears to hear the guidance of the Spirit and recognize as it speaks to us. Our leaders have taught us that ministering, in the Lord’s way, is led by the Spirit.<sup>xxii</sup> As we counsel with the Lord daily and listen to the still small voice, we can receive the revelation, inspiration and guidance and know who needs our help and what we can do to help them. President Henry B. Eyring said, “Great ministers have qualified for the Holy Ghost as a nearly constant companion. And they have qualified for the gift of charity, which is the pure love of Christ. We receive the Holy Spirit best when we are focused on serving others.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith”<sup>xxiv</sup> Can the Lord trust us that we will follow through with the promptings He gives us? Are our ears listening so when the Lord is tapping us on the shoulder to serve someone, we will respond?

President Thomas S. Monson taught, “When we have eyes that see and ears that hear and hearts that know and feel, we will recognize needs of our fellow beings who cry out for help.”<sup>xxv</sup> After our eyes have been opened, and we have learned to listen, engaging our hearts is the actual doing part.

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...”<sup>xxvi</sup> The action of doing is ministering with our hearts full of love. Applying our seeing and hearing in a way that the Lord can work through us. Sister Elaine Jack said, “The heart is the key to our influence, for it counts and measures each kindness, each effort, each time we lift, praise, teach, or cheer one another.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

Doing happens one person at a time, one kind deed at a time, one day at a time. Each of us DO in a different way because the Lord has blessed us with different talents and abilities. As we learn to use those talents and express love through our own individualized love language, we can touch lives. We can lift others burdens and give hope.

There is so much that I have learned about doing and loving from children and the youth through simple acts, in particular lessons learned from my own children and grandchildren. Here are a few examples:

One day I asked my 6-year-old granddaughter Ella May for some help when we were tending her. Her reply, “Nana, you picked the right girl. I like to help and I like to clean.” What a perfect response to those in need: “Pick me, I’m the right girl,” “Pick me, I’m the right boy.” Be the someone who is ready and excited to help. Be the first one to respond to someone in need.

Another granddaughter, Hadley who lives in Meridian, Idaho, is spreading kindness. One of her friends was inspired by a recent movie she saw and wanted to show kindness. She sent out invitations to all in her class, asking if they would like to join a kindness club. These girls, of many different religions, have met together now for several months. Writing happy notes in chalk on the school playground, leaving “Be Kind” bookmarks in random books in the school library, and making cookies for and visiting a nursing home in the area. They even have t-shirts that read ‘Believe there is Good in the World...Be the Good.’ These young girls have chosen to serve others through small acts of kindness.

Joseph B. Wirthlin said, “Kindness is the essence of a celestial life. Kindness is how a Christlike person treats others. Kindness should permeate all of our words and actions at work, at school, at church, and especially in our homes.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

Nixon, my 9-year-old grandson saw a need and acted. Last Christmas he left a note on his Mom and Dad’s pillow. The note read, “Dear Mom and Dad, I know Christmas is about giving, not getting, and since I know you are Santa, and you buy the presents, here is some money to make up. With love, Nixon”

Children are a blessing in our lives as they show us how to express love. Children are submissive, meek, humble, patient and full of love. Jesus Christ taught us to look to children as an example. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>xxix</sup> Children are doers in the Lord’s way.

It seems simple to go about doing simple acts of love and kindness but life isn’t always simple. We all have times when we feel overwhelmed or inadequate to meet the demands of life. We struggle to accomplish all that we must do AND we might feel we are falling short and not doing enough. We have these struggles with ourselves in wanting to do more, but how? How can I do more, minister more, serve more?

President Thomas S. Monson, “You may lament: I can barely make it through each day, doing all that I need to do. How can I provide service for others? What can I possibly do?...Find someone who is having a hard time or is ill or lonely, and do something for him or her.”<sup>xxx</sup>

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “In spite of what we all feel are our limitations and inadequacies—and we all have challenges—nevertheless, may we ‘labor side by side with the Lord of the vineyard,’<sup>xxxi</sup> giving the God and Father of us all a helping hand with His staggering task of answering prayers, providing comfort, drying tears, and ‘strengthening feeble knees.’<sup>xxxii</sup> If we will do that, we will be more like the true disciples of Christ we are meant to be.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Yes, there is always something we can be doing, yes, there is always more to be done, but really you ARE doing, you ARE serving, you ARE meeting the needs before you.

My daughter-in-law taught me about this recently with a recent experience she had as she was studying the scriptures. The scripture passage she read is in the 25th chapter of Matthew, one we are familiar with and have read many times, and one I told her I wanted to share with you today. Her sharing brought new meaning to this scripture for me and I want to share it with her permission and in her words.

“I had a special experience today as I did my scripture study. I had prayed to know if I was okay, if God was pleased with my efforts as a mother. I was near the end of my study and still hadn’t felt I had received a specific feeling to that prayer. I said to myself, ‘It’s okay. It’s because I can have faith and I must not need one.’ Then on the last page I read this scripture, one I usually read and feel guilt and self-disappointment. The first time I read it, I felt more of the same. ‘I’m not so sure I’ll be on the right hand. I don’t give enough to the poor. I don’t take enough meals or hand out enough to the hungry.’ Even though I know those things aren’t always literal, I still felt disappointment. I wasn’t naturally a person who serves and gives like ‘others.’ But then I felt prompted to read it again, and to put it in the context of how I was doing in that scripture as a mother:

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

I felt so sweetly that I’m doing it, in every way. That as a mother, as I keep striving, I am succeeding. I am doing for the “least of these.”<sup>xxv</sup>

Thank you Candice for teaching me. I am so grateful for the lessons I learn from those up close and personal to me, my friends, my children and their spouses, my grandchildren and my husband. Remember the scripture counsel, “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

May I share one last up close and personal example? My husband has taught me throughout his life how to love and serve no matter what life brings. He has had many health challenges, but is an example of serving come what may. His faith and testimony are inspiring to all those he meets. Just recently he had surgery and had a pacemaker put in. When he was in the hospital recovering and needing care, he was doing his thing, teaching and serving others. Here is what one nurse said as he cared for him. “Thank you for being my patient today. I am amazed and grateful how you insist on uplifting and elevating all those you come in contact with. Keep it up! You still have many great things to accomplish in this life, and I feel privileged to have known and helped you on your way.”  
Thanks, CJ.

Miracles can happen as we go about doing with hearts full of pure love. Ministering in the Lord’s way and meeting the needs of one another.

A song written by Sally Deford entitled “Miracles”<sup>xxvii</sup> expresses beautifully how I feel.

*I will bear the burden of my neighbor in his need  
I will share my Savior’s love in every kindly deed,  
He will magnify my efforts and I’ll understand at last  
That by these small and simple things are great things brought to pass*

*There are hands I cannot hold, hearts I cannot comfort,  
Tears that only miracles can stay,  
So let me love and serve and teach those who come within my reach,  
For miracles begin that way.*

Sisters you ARE the miracles in others lives. Remember and don’t ever underestimate all the simple Christ-like acts of love you are doing in your families, in your callings, in your work, wherever your path takes you, your simple acts are really simply great. All your demonstrations of love and the sacrifices you make are valued.

Sister Jean B. Bingham said, “True ministering is accomplished one by one with love as the motivation. And with love as the motivation, miracles will happen.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

As we have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts full of the active ingredient of love, we will be doing the work of our Master, Jesus Christ. Let us turn to him, who is the “Bread of Life.”<sup>xxix</sup> He will provide for our needs and will help us as we strive to meet the needs of one another. Just as the Savior tenderly ministered to the children one by one in the account of his visit to the Americas,<sup>xxx</sup> may we willingly submit to His will with child-like love and minister to others one by one, one small and simple act at a time. May we rise as true disciples with the active ingredient of love, and master our ministering as we meet the needs before us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## References

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- <sup>vi</sup> Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be With and Strengthen Them,” April 2018
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