

**“Our Savior’s Love”**  
Sister Susan L. Gong and Elder Gerrit W. Gong  
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

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**Sister Susan L. Gong:** Dear sisters and brothers, we, Gerrit and I, are really grateful and delighted to be with you today.

Will you give us a couple of minutes to get to know you? We’ve got a few questions and if you would just show by raise of hands:

How many of you are attending BYU Women’s Conference for the very first time?

Is there anyone here who attended the very first Women’s Conference in 1976?

Who was able to attend and enjoy the Evening of Entertainment concert last night?

Who came from east of the Mississippi?

From west of the Mississippi?

From a country other than the United States?

**Elder Gerrit W. Gong:** Sometimes “nudge” and “fudge” go together. Who has felt “nudged to fudge”—as in irresistibly drawn to BYU fudge or chocolate while here?

Anyone proud of “fudging the nudge”— as in resisting the chocolate temptation while here?

**Sister Gong:** That is classic dad humor. Sister Sandi Rogers—in her 16th year of ably chairing Women’s Conference this year—she shared with us that there were 20 BYU Women’s Conference local humanitarian service projects this year. They included cutting fleece blankets, assembling birthday bags for underprivileged children, and assembling meal packets. Who participated in this year’s humanitarian service projects?

It’s said that a picture is worth a thousand words and we have a couple of photos to share with you from this year’s Women’s Conference

Friends from across the world...



Cousins who attend Women's Conference together...



Sisters who come to Women's Conference...





missionary companions...



college roommates...







friends that met at Women's Conference...



and those who love serving together...



**Elder Gong:** This feels a little like speaking at General Conference! You feel the love and prayers of those sitting in front of you –and the love and prayers of those sitting behind you!

We recognize our Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies. Each a General Church Officer, these nine remarkable sister leaders bless the whole Church. We miss Sister Jean B. Bingham, who is representing the Church, as you know, at the White House National Day of Prayer.

**Sister Gong:** We also recognize BYU President Kevin Worthen, Sister Peggy Worthen his wife, our Women’s Conference chair Sandi Rogers, and our BYU Presidents’ council colleagues and their companions. We acknowledge our Women’s Conference committee, they do so much work. and many friends and colleagues across the BYU campus.

### **Our Savior’s Love**

**Sister Gong:** [Elder Gong is seated] He’s abandoned me. Sometimes I call him Elder Gone.

We wish that we could talk to each of you to learn what it is you have experienced, and felt and discovered over these last two days. Wonderful things happen when righteous, faithful, open-to-the-Spirit women gather. Because of what we’ve learned here we will be different. We take away a surer sense of God’s love for us and that gives us strength to do what is most important and special—the small and simple things we do to lift, serve, and minister to one another.

The change from “visiting teaching to ministering in a high and holier way”<sup>i</sup> invites us to think more deeply about the new commandment that the Savior gave his disciples, “As I have loved you, love one another.”<sup>ii</sup> I want to share three observations about what it might mean to love as Jesus loves.

#### **Understand**

First, Jesus knows the heart of every daughter or son of God. In the New Testament we see that he understands the essential nature of every person he meets. He knows Nathanael is a man without guile.<sup>iii</sup> He knows Nicodemus, the Pharisee who sneaks in, in the middle of the night, is truly seeking to understand.<sup>iv</sup> And from the beginning He understands that Peter—impetuous, hopeful, vulnerable, two-steps forward-one-step-back Peter—has it within him to lead the Church, else why would Christ on their very first meeting, give him the name Cephas,<sup>v</sup> meaning “the Rock”?

Christ knows the heart of the Samaritan woman, “Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.”<sup>vi</sup> Those words must have been spoken with incredible tenderness because they evoke such a humble response, perhaps one full of wonder. “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.”<sup>vii</sup>

He knows the hearts of His persecutors, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”<sup>viii</sup>

There is healing, there is hope in just being known, just being understood. Perhaps you instinctively know the hearts of those you minister to. Perhaps you have that incredible gift of discernment. I do not. So if I am to love as Jesus would love, what do I need to do? I need to learn to listen.

When Elder Gong and I lived in Hong Kong our apartment was located on one of the busiest streets in one of the busiest cities in the world. It was often hard to hear Gerrit unless we stood face-to-face. One day in frustration Gerrit said, “Sweetheart, when we’re next in Salt Lake will you please have

your hearing tested?” I obligingly visited an audiologist who, after testing my hearing proclaimed, “Mrs. Gong, I have good news and bad news. The good news is your hearing is perfect. The bad news is that may mean you have a listening problem and there’s not much I can do about that.”

So I am on notice, I need to learn to listen better. I need to put down my electronic devices. I need to shut out the distractions and turn off the little voice in my head that’s constantly reminding me of all of the things on my ‘to do’ list. And then listen with my heart, to understand not just what someone is saying, but who it is I’m talking to, a child of God. I need to listen for that.

I’m discovering that listening means not just hearing the other person but listening to the Holy Ghost as well. The Holy Ghost helps us ask inspired questions that lead us to greater understanding.

### **Feel Compassion**

A second observation from the scriptures about how Jesus loves us is that compassion always accompanies Christ’s understanding of our hearts. He has compassion on the blind,<sup>ix</sup> on the widow of Nain,<sup>x</sup> on lepers,<sup>xi</sup> on the brother of Jared,<sup>xii</sup> on one possessed with a devil,<sup>xiii</sup> “and, multiple times, he has compassion on the multitude.<sup>xiv</sup> From the cross he voices compassion for Mary, His mother.<sup>xv</sup> Surely it is through his compassion that “he hath borne our grief.”<sup>xvi</sup>

Compassion is at the heart of Christ’s parables: The parable of the debtor,<sup>xvii</sup> The Good Samaritan,<sup>xviii</sup> the father of the prodigal son,<sup>xix</sup> all exhibit compassion.

For most of us, compassion requires imagination and intention. In our spheres of ministering we can strive to feel how it really feels

- to wrangle adorable and demanding preschoolers day in and day out.
- to be a divorced mom reentering the workforce after many years.
- to be 90 and alone.
- to be the returning prodigal.
- to have been abandoned or abused.
- to receive a diagnosis of cancer.
- to have been abused.
- to have lost a child to illness.
- to have lost a child to the world.

As Christians we are called to feel the pain of others. In this we truly “bear one another’s burdens.”<sup>xx</sup> When we have compassion—true empathy—something wondrous happens. We begin to know how to help.

### **Bless**

This is my third observation about how Jesus loves. Having taken upon himself our infirmities, He knows how to succor us. Having felt our fear, our want, our loneliness, our hunger, our hurt, He responds to our specific need. He comforts, supplies, feeds, heals, nurtures, teaches, and blesses us.

Like the Good Samaritan, when Christ finds us suffering, He has compassion on us, He comes to us, binds our wounds, and brings us to the inn and cares for us.<sup>xxi</sup>

And the Church is the inn where we, like the innkeeper, are called upon to minister to each other until the master returns.

Know the heart. Feel compassion. Bless. This is the Savior's pattern of ministering and it can be ours.

I recently lost a dear friend who lived by this pattern. At her funeral her daughter said, "My mother was good at everything important and special. She wanted everyone to have their story known. She paid notice in the most significant ways. How can you give up on yourself when your mom is this most profound person who sees you as are and still believes in you?"

Another eulogy described this dear Christ-like sister like this: "She was the giver of thoughtful gifts, the rescuer of stranded souls, a healer of broken hearts, a polisher of tarnished halos. She was the kind of person who always held the mirror at the most flattering angle. A woman of substance. She was observant of human need. Her response to suffering was always to ease the burden. Hers was love unfeigned."

As I hear the Prophet call us to a higher, holier form of ministry, I think of my friend. We are being asked to love as she loved—to be good at what is special and important.

But where do we get the patience, insight, imagination, courage and strength to love like this?

In December I had the blessing of attending the Salt Lake Temple with a recently endowed friend, a sister I've known since elementary school. Life has presented her with many challenges and her connection with the Church has sometimes been tenuous, though I believe she has always had a spark of the gospel in her heart.

As we walked the corridors of that magnificent temple, she stopped at every painting of the Savior, reached toward it, then bowed her head and touched her heart. In the celestial room she prayed fervently—having finally come to the House of the Lord she was in no hurry to leave. On our way home we walked through a bookstore, each of us browsing different sections.

Coming up behind me she whispered, "Susan, you've got to see this! Someone has painted a picture of me!" We rounded a corner. She pointed to this beautiful image created by Brian Kershisnik.<sup>xxii</sup> "That's me!" She exclaimed. "That's just how I feel!"

Loved.

Blessed.

Sisters, I testify that because we are loved with the "matchless bounty of the [Savior's] love"<sup>xxiii</sup> with the infinite love of our Heavenly Father, through their love we can come to understand one another, have compassion for one another, and bless one another, in every way that is important and special. "We love him because he first loved us."<sup>xxiv</sup> Because He loves us, we can learn to love and minister to one another. The Holy Ghost will help us know how.

This glorious gospel is true. It is powerful. It is beautiful and it is important. I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Sister Sharon Eubank, “That We May All Sit Down in Heaven Together” May 3, 2018, BYU Women’s Conference (Quoting President Russell M. Nelson, April 2018, General Authority Training)

<sup>ii</sup> John 13:34

<sup>iii</sup> John 1:49

<sup>iv</sup> John 3:1–9

<sup>v</sup> John 1:42

<sup>vi</sup> John 4:17–18

<sup>vii</sup> John 4:19

<sup>viii</sup> JST Luke 23:35

<sup>ix</sup> John 9:1–7

<sup>x</sup> Luke 7:12; BD Burial ‘widow of Nain’

<sup>xi</sup> Luke 17:12

<sup>xii</sup> Ether 3:6–13

<sup>xiii</sup> Mark 5: 1–13; Luke 4:33–37

<sup>xiv</sup> 3 Nephi 17:7,9; Matthew 9:36, Matthew 14:14, Matthew 15:32; Mark 8:2

<sup>xv</sup> John 19:27

<sup>xvi</sup> Isaiah 52:4

<sup>xvii</sup> Luke 7:41

<sup>xviii</sup> Luke 10:30

<sup>xix</sup> Luke 15:11–32

<sup>xx</sup> Mosiah 18:8

<sup>xxi</sup> Luke 10:33.

<sup>xxii</sup> Brian Kershnik painting, “She Will Find That Which Is Lost,” used with permission

<sup>xxiii</sup> Alma 26:15.

<sup>xxiv</sup> 1 John 4:19