

PROVIDING STRENGTH TO OTHERS

MY FOUNDATION: Become One, Serve Together

PONDER: How does losing myself in the service of others actually save me?

WATCH: “In the Lord’s Way,”

DISCUSS: How can serving others open the windows of heaven in your life?

READ: Some feel that they deserve what others already have, which can cause resentment. Others feel entitled to things they have not earned. These two traps blind people from seeing an essential truth: all things belong to God. Resentment and entitlement can be overcome by focusing on the needs of others.

READ AND DISCUSS the following related scripture passage and statement by President Hinckley:

“When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

“When you are united, your power is limitless. You can accomplish anything you wish to accomplish” Gordon B. Hinckley,

ACTIVITY

Step 1: As a group, think of someone who needs help.

Step 2: Discuss the talents, contacts, and resources you have to offer.

Step 3: Make a plan to serve that person.

READ: “When we work together cooperatively, . . . we can accomplish anything. When we do so, we eliminate the weakness of one person standing alone and substitute the strength of many serving together” Thomas S. Monson

COMMIT: We will act on the plan we made to serve someone.

PROVIDING STRENGTH TO OTHERS

1. MINISTERING LIKE THE SAVIOR

READ: The Lord has asked us to minister to those around us. The story of Alma and Amulek is instructive. Alma realized that Amulek was truly suffering emotionally, and he personally took him “to his own house, and did administer unto him in his tribulations, and strengthened him in the Lord” (Alma 15:18).

PONDER: How have people helped you be “strengthened . . . in the Lord”?

DISCUSS: What are ways that we can strengthen others in the Lord?

2. MYTHS ABOUT HELPING OTHERS

READ: There are several common myths you may believe about helping others. As you read through the following myths, evaluate whether or not you have ever felt these ways.

Myth #1: I Am 100% Responsible for Providing Others the Help They Need.

The Reality: The Savior is the only true healer of souls, but you can be part of a healing community to bless others. You will become part of this healing community as you offer your unique strengths and perspective and give when you can.

Myth #2: I Should Be the Expert on Solving Others’ Problems.

The Reality: Even professional counselors believe their role is simply helping a person make his or her own changes rather than providing an instruction manual. Your role is to love and minister to people, and the Savior will do the healing.

Myth #3: There Are Quick Fixes to Life’s Problems.

The Reality: Our culture is one of instant gratification, and quick solutions are promised for nearly anything. But there are rarely quick fixes to life’s problems. Working through change is a process and nearly always takes longer than you think it will. Real change is a refinement process that you or your loved ones have to go through.

Myth #4: I Don’t Know the Right Thing to Say, so It’s Better I Don’t Say Anything.

The Reality: The good news is that you often don’t have to say much. The greatest gift you can give others is to show interest in them, ask questions, listen with love, and help them feel safe sharing with you.

Myth #5: If I Help at All, They Will Always Become Dependent on Me.

The Reality: As you serve, you can set healthy boundaries to make sure you are taking care of yourself and your family. The Lord can guide you so that you serve in ways that strengthen the other person's self-reliance. Never underestimate the power that small and simple acts of love can have in people's lives, and don't be afraid of investing time and love in someone.

DISCUSS: Discuss with a partner one of these myths you may struggle with and how you can overcome it.

3. RESPOND TO OTHERS APPROPRIATELY

READ: Regardless of your best intentions, it is easy to say things that are not very helpful while trying to help someone through difficult times. But this should not scare you away from continuing to try to be helpful. God wants you to love and help His children. Be sensitive to the feelings of those you are trying to help, taking care not to say or do anything that minimizes their pain and difficulty

ACTIVITY

As a group, read the statements that follow. The statements are examples of things you might say if you were trying to help someone who is going through a difficult time. Evaluate each statement to determine whether it minimizes what the person is going through or offers empathy and support. Write an "X" in the "Helpful" column or the "Not Helpful" column to indicate your response.

Statement	Helpful	Not Helpful
"Everything happens for a reason."		
"Just look on the bright side."		
"I can't imagine what you are going through."		
"I'm glad you told me about this."		
"I'm happy to listen any time."		
"What you need to do is just . . ."		
"What has this been like for you?"		
"This must be hard to talk about."		
"I know just how you feel."		
"May I offer a suggestion that could help?"		

DISCUSS: What are other phrases you've heard that are helpful or not helpful?

4.VALIDATING OTHERS

Read: To validate people's feelings means to first accept their feelings and then to understand them.

Below are some steps to help you validate someone who is facing a challenge:

1. Listen. Be present and listen intently to what the person is telling you. Don't be defensive if you have contributed to the person's problem.

2. Try to understand. You may need to ask compassionate questions to better understand what this person is feeling. Do your best to understand where the person is coming from.

3. Accept the person's feelings. Don't try to change the person or say he or she is wrong for feeling this way. As you do this, be careful not to encourage unhealthy or harmful thinking patterns.

4. Express compassion. Express that you care about what the person is feeling. Even if you can't relate to the situation or the cause of the feeling, you can validate the person's feelings by saying things like "You feel disrespected [or anxious, hopeless, worthless, angry, and so on]. It's hard to feel that way."

5. Show love. Tell this person that you care about them and that you are confident in his or her ability to solve or overcome the problem.

ACTIVITY:

Step 1: As a group, read the situations below of individuals going through difficult times.

Step 2: Discuss some things you could say that might be helpful to these individuals.

- A friend or family member tried out for something (School Musical, Soccer, Volleyball, Drill, Football, etc.) and did not make the cut. They are devastated.
- A friend just found out their family is moving in two weeks to another state. They feel like their life will never be the same.
- Someone you know is experiencing anxiety and feels their life is falling apart.

5.HONORING THE AGENCY OF OTHERS

READ: Heavenly Father has given everyone the gift of agency, and individuals are responsible for their own choices regardless of the help you offer. As you reach out to others, remember that you are not responsible for solving their problems or controlling the choices they make. It is important to set your own healthy boundaries while helping others.

The Savior wants you to honor your loved ones' agency, but that doesn't necessarily mean standing by passively. Seek the Spirit in helping you understand how you can serve others in ways that honor their agency and that don't make others feel unheard.

The following are ideas for things you might do in addition to validating feelings and listening:

- Fast and pray for them.
- Go to the temple on their behalf.
- Send notes of encouragement, or share humorous messages to make them smile.
- Seek priesthood blessings and counsel.
- Make yourself available to them while maintaining healthy boundaries.
- Serve them in ways they ask for or agree to—ways that don't violate their agency or make them feel unheard.

DISCUSS: Share an uplifting experience you had while being strengthened or while providing strength to others

Back to the first question that we pondered:

How does losing myself in the service of others actually save me?

COMMITMENT: What am I willing to commit to as a result of what I have learned today?