

The Errand of Angels Is Given to Women

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It is marvelous for me to be here with each of you and feel the warmth of your spirits. Just six weeks ago I didn't think I would be able to attend the conference this year—but I'm here. Things can change quickly.

Being here on the BYU campus has brought back so many wonderful memories. Sandra Rogers and I were in the same dorm my freshmen year at BYU. We were on the same basketball team. (It was a ward team—we didn't play for the university. She could have, but not me.) Sandi is a fabulous basketball player. I averaged 2 points per game, but I felt like I was contributing anyway. We had great times and it was a lot of fun.

It was here at BYU where I first attended Relief Society. This is where I had my first visiting teaching assignment and received my first visiting teachers.

One Relief Society memory that stands out for me was our ward cookbook. Everyone was asked to contribute some recipes. I had put it off until the last night, the night they were due. Our Relief Society president came over and put on a little pressure to turn in some recipes. My roommates and I sat down and got busy on the assignment. My roommates delved into their mother's recipes books but I didn't have mine with me. So I was forced to make mine up. My homemade recipes had real ingredients in them but I totally made up the amounts of sugar, salt, and flavoring that should go into the recipes. And now, I want to sincerely apologize to anyone who may have tried those recipes—especially the Ice Box Dessert. I thought it really looked good but I can't imagine how it tasted. I'm sorry if any of you wasted time or money on it.

I would also like to apologize to our dorm parents for sometimes forgetting the rules and especially for having that fake candle-passing and pretending that one of our dorm sisters was engaged when she really wasn't. I realized afterwards that my roommates and I did not give proper respect to this time-honored tradition. And for those who needed counseling to recover from that event, I'm really sorry.

I would like to say I have made significant changes for the better since that time, but that might be exaggerating. However, lately I have been trying a lot harder.

A little over one month ago I was busy at work in my office of a charitable organization for abused and neglected children when my bishop called. He is rather a kidder and it took some time to finally convince me that I needed to call President Faust's office right away. Immediately fear gripped my heart. I knew I hadn't done anything bad enough to get excommunicated by a member of the First Presidency. I tried to convince myself that maybe he was calling me to be on the Days of '47 Parade Committee—I love parades—but somehow I knew it wasn't that. I finally knew it was Relief Society.

I left the office and cried all the way home and for several hours after that as I had a bright recollection of all the people I had offended, been cross with, had been impatient with, and so on. How would people ever be able to vote to sustain a calling for me? I wished I had been kinder, more patient, more charitable, more like so many of you. (I also knew that I didn't have anything to wear and there was no way I could lose 100 pounds in one week) It was a tough day.

Later that afternoon I had the interview with President Faust. Some of it is a blur when it comes to remembering what I said, but I remember very well what he said. One thing that stands out for me was when he said, "Sister Thompson, we are all just ordinary people, called to do a work for the Lord for a season. Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies." Then we just sat and cried together. He said he would pray for me if I would pray for him.

The week until general conference was one of the most difficult of my life. I could tell no one—not my sister, my father, no one. However, the Lord showed me His tender mercy by having my bishop call me shortly after I returned home from meeting with President Faust. He asked me if I needed to talk and if I needed a blessing. I needed both and he came right over. I am so thankful for my priesthood leaders and that they are in tune with the Holy Spirit.

Sister Beck told me I would be receiving tickets for my family to come to conference. One sister, who I am very close to, lives in Virginia. One brother travels frequently and is often out of town. Two days after my call, my stepmother, who had been ill and living in a care center for two years, passed away suddenly. It was a blessing for her to be released from the body that held her bound. It was also another tender mercy for me because my whole family was in town for the funeral that was held the day before conference. My dad and my brothers and sisters were all able to be with me as I was sustained in general conference.

Still all of this was hard to take in. When President Monson read the names of the new Relief Society presidency, I remember thinking I would die if someone yelled out, "Not her!" As I walked up those steps to sit in the red seats, I wanted to just walk on by and sit with the Tabernacle Choir. I've always wanted to sing with the Choir and I think that was

probably my only chance.

The week after general conference the sessions are replayed on BYU-TV. I watched that first session again and listened to the sustaining. Then I watched while the new people walked up to their seats and I said, “Yep, that’s me.”

Anyway sisters, I don’t understand the “whys” about this calling. There are so many capable, wonderful, dedicated women in this Church. But please know that I love the Lord and I love my sisters in the gospel. I also have a great love for Sister Beck and Sister Allred. It is amazing to me how quickly and firmly love grows as we serve together to build God’s kingdom and serve His children.

It is so easy to recall many wonderful things that women have done for one another, for their families, and for the whole human race.

From the minutes of the early meetings of Relief Society we learn what Emma Smith said: “We are going to do something extraordinary. When a boat is stuck on the rapids, with a multitude of Mormons on board, we shall consider that a loud call for relief—we expect extraordinary occasions and pressing calls.”¹

When the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society he declared, “And I now turn the key to you in the name of God and this Society shall rejoice and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time—this is the beginning of better days to this Society.”²

In one early meeting the secretary of the Relief Society wrote that “nearly all present arose and spoke, and the spirit of the Lord like a purifying stream, refreshed every heart.”³

In another one of the early meetings of Relief Society, Joseph Smith said, “No man can steady the ark—my arm cannot do it—God must steady it. . . . Said Jesus, ‘Ye shall do the work which ye see me do.’ These are the grand key words for the Society to act upon.”⁴

Yes, I believe that the errand of angels is given to women.

As the song goes:

“The errand of angels is given to women,
And this is a gift that, as sisters, we claim:
To do whatsoever is gentle and human,
To cheer and to bless in humanity’s name.”⁵

The Relief Society was organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith to bless the lives of women and families as we seek to come unto Christ. Relief Society was organized to provide relief to the poor and needy and to save souls.

During the sesquicentennial of the Relief Society in 1992 thousands upon thousands of LDS women around the world participated in service and were on the errand of angels. The accounts received at headquarters were amazing.

Our wonderful Relief Society women, disciples of Jesus Christ, had cared for the sick, the poor, the needy. Hospitals were helped, food pantries were supplied, blankets and quilts were delivered by the thousands. Sisters aided the disabled and transformed homes needing repair. Women's shelters were build or remodeled, parks and community places were replenished and beautified, temple ordinances were performed for thousands of our deceased sisters, hygiene kits were assembled, literacy efforts blessed countless lives, and the list goes on and on.

Doctrine and Covenants 123:17: "Therefore, dearly beloved brethren [sisters], let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our powers; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed."

You are angels, daughters of God. It is my distinct honor and blessing to be among you and feel the warmth of your love and kindness. Thank you for all the good you do in this world. Thank you for blessing the lives of people all around you. Thank you for standing firm and believing that you are daughters of God.

Notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
5. "As Sisters in Zion," *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 309.