

*“Charity Never Faileth”*  
Elaine S. Dalton

---

*This address was given Thursday, April 28, 2011 at the BYU Women’s Conference*

© 2011 by Brigham Young University Women’s Conference. All rights reserved.

For further information write:

BYU Women’s Conference

161 Harman Continuing Education Building

Provo, Utah 84602

801-422-7692

E-mail: [womens\\_conference@byu.edu](mailto:womens_conference@byu.edu)

Home page: <http://womensconference.byu.edu>

---

In Mormon’s final witness, he declares that “charity [the pure love of Christ] never faileth” (Moroni 7:46). The gift of charity comes from the Savior. Charity is there because Christ is there. It endures into the darkest night through difficult trials and on into the sunshine because He does. God so loved us that He gave His Only Begotten Son, Christ (see John 3:16). Christ so loved us that His infinite Atonement made it possible for us to return back to our heavenly home and into the presence of God’s pure love. Mormon’s promise is that such love, the pure love of Christ, is bestowed only upon true followers of Jesus Christ (see Moroni 7:47–48). Christ loved us, and that is how He hoped we would love each other.

I think I will have forever emblazoned in my mind an image of twin girls that was published in a magazine some years ago. These two little girls were born 12 weeks premature. One of the girls weighed two pounds and was struggling with problems ranging from breathing issues and troubling blood-oxygen levels and heart-rate difficulties. Her sister was two pounds, three ounces, and was considered the stronger of the two.

When the twins were a little less than a month old, the smaller of the two girls went into critical condition. Her nurse recounts that “she began gasping for breath, and her face and stick-thin arms and legs turned bluish-gray. Her heart rate was way up. Her parents watched, terrified that she might die.” The nurse did all that she could, and nothing seemed to work. She then remembered a common procedure that was used in parts of Europe that helped struggling premature babies that was called double-bedding. After the parents gave permission, the nurse put the two babies together in one incubator, hoping it would do some good. “No sooner had the door of the incubator closed than [the struggling twin] snuggled up to [her sister]—and calmed right down. Within minutes [her] blood-oxygen readings were the best they had ever been since she was born. And as she dozed, [her sister] wrapped her tiny arm around her small sibling” (Nancy Sheehan,

“A Sister’s Helping Hand,” *Reader’s Digest*, May 1996, 155–56). The rest of the story, as they say, is history.

Do any of you ever feel stressed or overwhelmed or have an especially bad day? Perhaps what we need is an arm around us, a snuggle, or to just feel the warmth and strength of a sister’s loving touch.

I love this true story because I think it is what we can do for others. It is what we, as sisters, can do for each other, what wives can do for husbands and children, and what each of us can do for everyone in the world. We are all God’s precious children; each of us is beloved. We are here to become like Him—to follow His example, the example of His Son, and to become as He *is* as we do as He *does*. I believe the words of the once popular tune are more true today than ever: “What the world needs now is love, sweet love; that’s the only thing that there’s just too little of” (Hal David, “What the World Needs Now Is Love” [1965]).

In order to possess true charity, each of us must come to know and understand several things. First is our identity—who we are and who we have always been. The Young Women’s theme is true doctrine: “We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love Him.” His love is infinite and eternal. He loved us so much that He sent His Son to make it possible for us to return to Him once again. When we understand our identity, then that understanding defines all of our relationships. As C. S. Lewis said, “There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal” (*The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* [1965], 15). And Brigham Young also taught, “When we look upon the human face we look upon the image of our Father and God; there is a divinity in each person, male and female; there is the heavenly, there is the divine...” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 51).

Second, we must be pure. Moroni’s final words to each of us in these latter days—a generation he literally saw—exhorted us to “come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing” (Moroni 10:30). His exhortation or warning to us was to be pure and virtuous! He was an eyewitness to what happened to a society who had lost their faith, hope, and charity because they had lost their virtue and purity. Why did he exhort us in this manner? Again, it is part of His message on charity and gaining eternal life and the need to “lay hold upon every good thing ... until the coming of Christ” (Moroni 7: 25). Why? That “when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; ... that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48). The principle is never changing—*purity* cannot come from an *impure* source. Moroni teaches us that “a bitter fountain cannot bring forth good water; neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water” (Moroni 7:11). Thus, pure love cannot come from an impure source. In order to possess pure love, we must *be* pure and virtuous! We are developing patterns of thought and behavior, and they must be based on the highest moral standards. And our personal purity in thought and action will entitle us to receive the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

So that's third—since charity is a spiritual gift that is *bestowed* upon us, it comes as a result of the reception of the Holy Ghost. And since the Holy Ghost is given only to members of the Church, it follows that the fruits and gifts of this Spirit are given in their fulness to Church members. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught this principle: “Men [and women] must receive the gift of the Holy Ghost before that member of the Godhead will take up his abode with them and begin the supernal process of distributing his gifts to them... Thus the gifts of the Spirit are for believing, faithful, righteous people; they are reserved for the saints of God” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 370–71).

And fourth, as we make and keep our covenants, the promises those covenants contain will help us become as the Savior and bit by bit, week by week develop the ability to love as He would love, until we will become possessed with charity at the last day. This is a process, not an event. And so we must continually, daily, step by step, keep moving in that direction, always remembering Him and keeping His commandments.

Several years ago President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke about the women of the Church—you and me—in a worldwide broadcast. I still remember how I felt as I heard him refer to the women of the Church “as the one bright shining hope in a world... marching toward [moral] self-destruction” (“Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20). I still have my dog-eared copy of that speech. It awakened inside of me a sense of who I am and my eternal identity and possibilities. When imperfect people commit to shining, and loving, and serving in our appointed places, as we stretch forth our arms and encircle others we can know that all the while we are encircled “in the arms of [His] love” (D&C 6:20). I testify that this is true, because I have felt that love from time to time, even here. As women we must never lose sight of our divine identity and the fact that our influence, our love—our pure love—is powerful and paramount. We set the tones in our homes; we nurture and love. And charity—the pure love of Christ—never faileth.

We often think of charity as an action. But I think of charity as a state of the heart. Since my call to be the Young Women general president, I have felt it come as a gift into my life. It's a powerful gift; it is life changing, and it includes the ability to see with new eyes and feel with a new heart. It includes the gift of seeing others as God sees them. The true charity of which I speak makes it possible, and even easy, to look beyond behaviors, outward dress, and appearance to the nobility within. It is a “Technicolor” look into the immortal soul. The gift of charity enables the recipient to discern and to know the heart. Words are inadequate to describe this gift. But this I absolutely know: nearly all young women can be reached, softened, and brought back to a knowledge of her infinite worth, of her identity, by love—that pure love of which I speak today. Pure love—charity—never faileth.

Charity is a spiritual gift that is bestowed from the Father to all who are true followers of His Son, Jesus Christ. The gift of charity comes because of the Savior's infinite Atonement. It is more than outward actions—more than casseroles and canned-good donations; it is a condition of the heart. This I also know: it is a gift that is earned, sought after, and does not come easily because it is in direct opposition to the natural man or

woman. It is *bestowed*, and it doesn't come without patience, practice, repentance, and purity—but it comes. President Ezra Taft Benson described the process this way: “The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 6). Charity can not only transform us; it can transform the world. Imagine what it would be like to live in a society that was constantly striving to possess this heavenly gift. It would be a Zion society! And Zion is the pure in heart—pure hearts, pure people, pure love!

I have been tutored about charity from each of you. I have been its recipient. In every country, in every circumstance in which I have traveled in my calling as the Young Women president, the women I have met have exhibited this gift. And as Elder Cook said in general conference, you are extraordinary! (see “LDS Women Are Incredible!” *Ensign*, May 2011, 18–21). It is a daunting task to go to places where you don't know a soul and to walk into a chapel filled with leaders you've never met and then in a second be encircled and enveloped by the love in the room—the love of the Savior for the women, the love of the Savior in your eyes and those present, the love of the gospel, and the love of others. It is pure, undiluted, unadulterated love—it is charity. You wear that mantle of charity regally! Thank you.

Shortly after the heartbreaking stillbirth of our daughter's first child at eight and a half months, I went to Chicago but had to leave her eventually and return home to Salt Lake City. I was worried about leaving her to face the ensuing gray Chicago winter days with this grief in her heart. Shortly after I returned home, Emi received a package on her doorstep. When opened, it held a statue of a woman, a pioneer woman, standing straight and erect, perhaps looking beyond present difficulties herself. The note accompanying the gift read simply, “You are strong and courageous.” This inspired act of pure love from a woman who was prompted by the Spirit has served as a beacon and a light in the days and even years that have followed for my daughter and for me. That magnificent woman's charity is a beacon in my life to this day.

Charity is not limited to age, and I have seen it manifest in the young women of the Church. One young woman told her story about her situation and her feeling toward the Mormon Church. Her story is the telling of how pure love changed her life. She relates it as follows. She said:

“I came from a family of four. My mother was LDS, but my father was intolerant toward the Mormon Church. There was great discord, many arguments, and much bitterness in our home. My parents quarreled constantly, both verbally and physically.

“We paid a price. At sixteen my older brother had been convicted on a narcotics charge and had been placed in a detention home. I was fourteen and headed down that same road.

“I had been baptized at eight and had always attended Sunday School with my mother. Now, at fourteen, I went to church only to get out of the house and keep peace with my mom.”

Then she said, “I’ll never forget the first Sunday some girls from my Mutual class came around to invite me to Mutual. Four girls! Two of them were cheerleaders at ... school [and] the other two ... I had, of course, seen at church and school and knew were popular and well liked.

And then she said, “How I hated those girls! I hated them because they were everything I wanted to be and couldn’t. I was nothing, I was low-class—I knew it and I knew they knew it, too. I hated them all. I took their crummy little invitation note and smugly lied that I’d be sure to make it out to Mutual. Of course, I never went.”

She said, “This story could have ended there. Those four girls had done their duty at the beginning of the year. I had been personally invited out to Mutual and had refused. What more could they do?

“Fortunately for me,” she said, “the story did not end there. In the months that followed, every Sunday one of those four girls would be at my door with an invitation. But she wouldn’t just drop it off and leave. Each girl would stay and talk to me for at least an hour. At first we would talk about the weather and about Sunday School, which were the only two things I had in common with them, and then we would sit through eternal silences.

“Gradually,” she said, “our conversations became closer. The girls always seemed so eager to listen to my ideas and problems. They never yelled at me or called me names. And yet I was still apprehensive and I still disliked them greatly. I never attended Mutual.

“Time went on, yet those same four girls never gave up. They took a special interest in me. They always said ‘hi’ at school and would stop and talk to me. They sat by me in classes. They found out which subjects I was flunking ... and would invite themselves over to study with me.

“I could not understand it. Why me? They knew the things I did—my reputation. Surely they felt my resentment toward them. Why did they keep on trying? I knew I was a lost cause. I felt pushed and cornered, my own conscience hurting. Still I fought them.”

Then she shares, “December 12 was my birthday. My family never made birthdays special. I got a ‘happy birthday’ from my mom and nothing from my dad, and I went through the school day not letting anyone know I was a year older. I planned on celebrating that night by sneaking out and going over to see some friends.

“At 8:00 that night the doorbell rang. I answered it and there stood my Mutual class. One girl had a cake in her hands and another a gallon of ice cream. They were all smiling and suddenly broke out singing ‘Happy Birthday.’ I didn’t even know how to react.

“I went to Mutual twice that month and once in January. But that was all. The three times I attended were great, and I felt a strange closeness toward those four girls, but the social pressure from my other friends was too great and after leading the kind of life I led all week, I just couldn’t face those Mutual girls. Still they befriended me and never judged.

“March 12 was a very dreary day in my life. I came home from school late. I had flunked an exam that afternoon and was very blue. I came home to find my parents in a very heated argument. Knowing how it would be, I went to my room and sat there, numb, just listening. I don’t remember much after that except losing all control.

“A few days later I gained consciousness in the hospital. For three weeks I lay in the hospital, and for three weeks not one of my friends came to see me. Not one! ... Where were they now when I needed their friendship?

“Instead, every day at 3:30 one of those four Mutual girls would be at my side. They were there every day. They brought me things to read, they sneaked in candy, and they brought in a transistor radio for me to listen to. We would do crossword puzzles together, and they would tell me the latest happenings at school. They never asked what happened and I never offered to tell.

“After I got out of the hospital I began to go to Mutual. I finally realized that those four girls who had taken an interest in me really were sincere. Not only had I grown to like them, but now I felt a bond of love between us. My life seemed to be going so much better. I was happier than I had ever been.

“April 2 was a day I shall never forget.... During the final period of school, the principal walked into the room with a note for me. I was to go home immediately. ... What was wrong at home?

“By the time I reached the house I knew something dreadful had happened. I raced through the front door and almost collided head-on with my dad. I looked up into a ghostly white, tear-streaked face.... He was trembling all over and could only mutter, ‘She’s gone, your mother’s passed away.’”

She said, “I was stunned. I turned and I began to run. I ran and ran and my tears mixed with the rain. I ran until I was exhausted, but I did not stop. My face was swollen and my head hurt. Still I ran. Then, suddenly, I saw from the opposite direction someone coming toward me. I paused and wiped my eyes. Could it be? One of those four Mutual girls, the girls who truly cared about me? One of those girls was running through the rain for me. I began to run again, and when we met I threw my arms around that girl and we both collapsed to the ground. I sat there crying, and she cried with me.”

Then she relates, “In the years that followed, I became one with those four Mutual girls. I learned to care, really care about others and to give of myself. I found that by helping others my own problems diminished.

“When the most important day of my life came, I knelt across the altar from my sweetheart and in the reflection of mirrors were those four Mutual girls, ... with tears running down their cheeks. They had made this possible for me.

“I’ll never know why I had been so important to them. Me, a nobody. I can only thank my Father in heaven for those girls and pray with all my heart that there are many more like them in his Church” (name withheld, “How I Hated Those Girls!” in Jay A. Parry, *Everyday Heroes: True Stories of Ordinary People Who Made a Difference* [2002], 73–77).

And I can testify that there are! I know this because I know many of you and I know your daughters. You are not ordinary. You are the Lord’s elect daughters. You know what it means to make and keep sacred covenants, and because of that you are striving to “always remember him” in your thoughts and your actions (see Moroni 4:3). By your small and simple acts of charity, you are changing the world. Don’t get discouraged; don’t give up. Your light, your love makes all the difference. Will each of you commit today to reach out and light up the life of a young woman daily? It doesn’t take much, and it doesn’t have to be grand—just a smile, a loving touch, an arm around, a compliment. Will you do that with me?

The world teaches us that it is all about winning. The Savior teaches us that winners help others succeed. The world teaches that we have no responsibility for another’s actions, decisions, or failures. The Savior teaches us that we can change lives, influence choices as we reach out, forget ourselves, and extend a hand of charity. President Thomas S. Monson reminded each of us of this eternal truth when he said: “In a hundred small ways, all of you wear the mantle of charity. Life is perfect for none of us. Rather than being judgmental and critical of each other, may we have the pure love of Christ for our fellow travelers in this journey through life. May we recognize that each one is doing her best to deal with the challenges which come her way, and may we strive to do *our* best to help out” (“Charity Never Faileth,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 125).

Now, one more illustration of charity at its finest, this Christlike attribute of pure love. It occurred years ago at the Special Olympics in Seattle. The story was told of “nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the hundred-yard dash.

“At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish for running the race to the finish and winning. All, that is, except one little boy, who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry.

“The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back ... every one of them.

“One girl with Down’s syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, ‘This will make it better.’ Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line. Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story.

“Why? Because deep down we know that what matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.... We achieve happiness when we seek the happiness and well-being of others” (Kirk Douglas, *My Stroke of Luck* [2002], 162–63).

I am grateful to know with an absolute certainty that there is One who, when I trip or stumble or fall, will be there to pick me up, dust me off, encircle me in the arms of His love, and walk with me to the finish line. I testify that He lives and that the more we become like Him in understanding our identity, being pure and virtuous in every aspect of our lives, and following the voice of the Spirit, and keeping our covenants, the more our personal charity—our pure love—will never fail. “Wherefore ... let us lay aside every weight,” everything that might hold us back, “and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Life teaches us that “charity never faileth” (Moroni 7:46). In fact, we can be assured “it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with [her]” (Moroni 7:47). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.