

“Strength from Grace: Faithful LDS Women”

Jean A. Stevens
First Counselor, Primary General Presidency

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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

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

Recently I had the great blessing of traveling to Africa on assignment with Sister Neill Marriott. It was an opportunity I’ll always hold dear in my heart. In every gathering we met remarkable Saints filled with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and living His gospel with such devotion. We returned with greater love and appreciation for the incredible women of this Church. I will never be the same.

Everywhere we went, I met women who love and serve their families. Their lives are not easy. Yet they are filled with a hope in Christ. I was drawn to them and especially to the love I saw in them. In every country we visited, I saw a unique demonstration of selfless love repeated over and over. The image became impressed on my heart, so much so that I snapped as many pictures as I could so I would always remember what I felt. Rebecca and Chipso are just [two] examples of women of Christ.

To me these images are representative of the divinely appointed gifts and responsibilities women carry. With great concern and love for their precious ones, these mothers wrap their children and happily carry them on their backs. The children are their focus, their priority. These treasured ones are protected and safeguarded. They keep the rising generation close, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

For these women and for women all over the world, this role to nurture, protect and teach children is often an overwhelming one. Mothers routinely feel inadequate. It seems we never quite feel equal to what is required. What could be more challenging or daunting than being responsible for the development and nurture of another’s life? Often it seems completely beyond our capacities, and in truth it is. It is only with the grace of God that we can hope to contribute our part in His divine work. This grace from God gives us, His daughters, His enabling power to do more and be more than we are on our own.

As Elder David A. Bednar explains, “Grace represents that divine assistance or heavenly help each of us will desperately need . . . the enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good, and serve beyond our own . . . natural capacity” (“In the Strength of the Lord,” *BYU Devotional*, Oct. 23, 2001).

So much of this important work is done in the daily moments of family life. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland reminds us, “There is nothing more important in this world than participating so directly in the work and glory of God, in bringing to pass the mortality and earthly life of His daughters and sons” (“Because She Is a Mother,” *Ensign*, May 1997).

Life comes with unique circumstances and challenges for all of us. Overcoming our challenges requires not only the best *we* can give, but also the generous help only heaven can give.

So what does grace really look like in the everyday moments of life? Let me share examples of real women who for me personify what grace is.

Grace is . . . a young mother with three very young children who describes her life as “living the dream.” For her that means laundry, cooking, cleaning, and very little sleep! Grace is . . . a young single adult sister who accepts a call to serve as her branch’s Relief Society president only two weeks after being baptized.

Grace is . . . a mother who presses on caring for an adult son who has permanent challenges resulting from a brain injury suffered in an accident. She does another load of laundry, provides another meal, and more importantly, a listening ear.

Grace is . . . a single sister who looks for ways to love and serve her 30 nieces and nephews and an additional 46 of their children in a way they’ll never forget. Her ministering includes flying to help young ones master math concepts.

Grace is . . . a grandmother in her 80s who cheerfully greets visitors, saying “I am so blessed,” despite both arms in casts after a fall.

Grace is . . . a mother creating a Christ-centered home for her children after disappointment and divorce shatter her world.

For these wonderful sisters and for all of us, Elder Holland offers his wise counsel. He reminds us whose work and whose children we serve. “You are doing God’s work. . . . Rely on Him. Rely on Him heavily. Rely on Him forever. And ‘press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope.’ (2 Nephi 31:20)” (“Because She Is a Mother,” *Ensign*, May 1997).

As we carry our divine responsibilities, may we come to see in our own life’s experiences the parallel of what Jesus Christ is willing to do for us. He carries us. His grace is sufficient for all who humble themselves before Him and have faith in Him. Then will He make us, His weak ones, become strong—even unto salvation.

I know Jesus Christ lives. I bear witness of His grace in the diverse circumstances of women across this world, and most assuredly in the moments of my own life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.