

“Serving and Supporting One Another”

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Sisters, what a joy to be with you today! I know that each of you has a very busy and full life, so I'm honored that you would take some of your time today and share it with us.

As I have thought about our wonderful BYU Women's Conference theme, "Remember, Remember," I've gone on a journey of remembrance of my own. Particularly since I was called to the Relief Society General Presidency, I've spent many moments reflecting on my life and what has brought me to this place. I have specifically spent time thinking back on my experiences in Relief Society and its influence in my life. Today I would like to tell you something of myself and my life's journey. Perhaps it will cause you to remember something of yourself and thus will tie us one to another.

I had a wonderful mother, who was always active in Relief Society. For many years she taught the monthly literature lessons, and I remember the hours and hours of time she spent reading and writing in preparation for that once-a-month moment. I truly know that the sisters in our ward, as well as our family, were blessed by the knowledge that she gained by so thoroughly preparing those lessons. She also served for many years as the secretary in our ward and stake Relief Society. My memory of this time was that she was always busy with reports, and rolls, and phone calls. In addition to that, she was a faithful visiting teacher, and I remember with particular fondness an older sister in our ward whom my mother visited. She was too infirm to participate much in church meetings. Mother loved this woman and wanted me to know and love her as well. I often went with my mom to visit, and together we spent a great deal of time in this sister's home. I came to love her as much as my mother did. Maybe we loved her because she reminded us of the mother and grandmother we had lost so many years earlier. Maybe it was simply her loving humility. I don't recall why she became so dear to us, but she is a sweet early memory of the joy that comes from visiting teaching.

As active as my mother was in Relief Society, she was not into grapes. Do you remember the grape period in Relief Society? Some of you who are younger may not, but at the time, it seemed like no home was complete without glass or resin grapes on the sofa table or mantel. Mom always said things like that just gathered dust, so she never made them. I kind of wish she had.

But my mother was a good seamstress and a quilter, and she spent many hours sewing for

our family and others in our neighborhood. I recall as a young adult coming home from college one afternoon and, upon entering our home, hearing laughter coming from the living room. Our living room was quite large, and on that day, virtually every inch of it was taken up with quilt frames perched on the backs of dining room chairs. Around that large quilt sat about ten Relief Society sisters. It was apparent from the number of times the quilt had been turned that they had been at their task all day. I remember them greeting me and Mom telling them of my involvement in Relief Society in my student ward. She said it proudly, and I was so pleased that she was excited that I was now a member of this wonderful organization. I have one other remembrance of that day: I was touched by the love and commitment shown by those women who sat all day working at that quilt. I have no idea who received the quilt, but I do know the quilters were a group of sisters serving and supporting one another.

Years passed, and all of a sudden I was a young mother living in Seattle, Washington, while my husband attended graduate school. We were members of the student ward, which met at the institute of religion on the University of Washington campus. While that was a time of relative poverty for us, it was also a time of growth in our commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I remember Relief Society and the circle of sisters who met each week in the basement of the institute. I recall with fondness the bazaars, where we bought back from each other everything we had made. And I remember the lessons, when we talked and thought together about gospel subjects and expanded our own understanding of the doctrine and governance of the Church. I particularly remember our bishop's wife and the wisdom and kindness she showed to each of us young sisters as she mentored and taught us how to lead, to teach, and to care for one another. I was experiencing an amazing growth spurt in my journey of becoming.

After graduate school, Dean and I moved to Missouri. As it did for the early sisters of the Church, Missouri represented a difficult phase of my life. We were expecting our third child during our first winter there—and we had no insurance. What had sounded like a lot of money for a first teaching position turned out not to be enough. Because we had no money to buy a coat for our two-year-old daughter, I wrapped her in a blanket and carried her so she would not get cold. After the birth of our son that winter, I sank into a horrible depression. Many of the women in my family suffer from postpartum depression and, as many of you know, in those days medical professionals did very little to help women with this condition. I was left to fight my way out of the darkness. But those hard times for me were often tempered and lightened by wonderful sisters in the ward who cared for my children and who cared for me physically, emotionally, and spiritually—helping me through that emotional battle. A missionary couple was assigned to our ward during that difficult winter, and I remember this sister missionary became the mother so many of us women were missing right then in our lives. Her loving arms held me and comforted me. On occasion, she would kindly scold me, “Kathy, just be glad you have a reason to get up in the morning.” While her words often brought me up short, I always felt her love. I was taught once again, by this special sister and by all the women in my ward, what it means to love and support and serve one another in and through Relief Society.

So my life has gone on. The ebbs and flows of life have come with regularity, but I have

learned that Relief Society is a safe place. It's a place where my mind is cared for, where my spirit can grow, and where I can continue to experience the love of the Savior, made manifest in and through others.

The two-year-old daughter I mentioned a moment ago is now a grown woman with her own little children. And what I see in her life is a repetition of the pattern of my own: a sister comes to take a toddler so a mother and new baby can rest. The toddler is returned home later in the day, but a meal comes home as well. My daughter also suffers from postpartum depression, and the sisters in her ward have succored her through her difficult days. One day in particular, as Amy sat crying after the birth of her daughter Katie, a sister in her ward stopped by. She wrapped her arms around Amy and simply said, "We'll get through this together." And that's what happened. So many of the sisters in her ward, knowing that she was fighting this depression, came to support her. Not a day would go by without someone calling or stopping by. Sometimes they brought meals or took her older children for a few hours, but most often they would just bring words of love and encouragement. Through that sisterhood, Amy got through that difficult time, just as I had. And now when I look at my little sweet granddaughter Katie, I cannot help but feel gratitude for the sisters who will one day help her through whatever difficult days that lie ahead.

Sisters, Heavenly Father sends us challenges. We all have them, and we will continue to have them. But remember that He is a vastly loving God, and it has always been His intention to support us through these challenges. He knows that we must be tested, and it is His desire that we succeed. He wants so desperately for us to return to Him one day. He also knows that the best way, the easiest way, to return to Him is to do it together. He knows that we need each other and He needs each of us to love and support each other. Remember that whenever Christ's church has been organized upon this earth, a key component to that organization has been serving and supporting one another.

Do you remember the words of Alma when he began to organize Christ's church? He invited all to come into the waters of baptism, but first he said that all who did must be "willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light." He went on to say, "Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:8-9).

Sisters, the same charge is given to us today by our being a part of this Church and the Relief Society organization. We have accepted that challenge to bear one another's burdens.

Now bearing one another's burdens sounds like a chore, but it's amazing how lightened we quickly feel when we do the work. Think for a moment why that is. When we bear one another's burdens, we are acting as an agent for Christ, and by so doing we're coming to Christ. I imagine you've already thought about the words of the scripture "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28, 30).

We are so blessed to belong to an organization that allows us to share our burdens—an organization that will nurture and care for us, one that is organized and designed to help us

grow and mature spiritually, one in which we learn to love and serve and support one another. How blessed and grateful we should be that our Heavenly Father knew what we would need and then provided the means—Relief Society—where these needs could be met through the hearts and hands of others who love.

I pray that we will “remember, remember” what we have been given and give thanks for the opportunity that we have through Relief Society to serve and support one another. May Heavenly Father bring to each of our remembrances our need for one another.

I leave you with my testimony that this Church is the true Church of Christ upon this earth, that He lives, that He loves each of us. I also send my love to each of you. Thank you for what you are doing. Thank you for your loving hands and warm hearts as you love and support each other. Thank you for who you are. May our Heavenly Father continue to bless you, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

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