

The Bond of Charity

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As I have listened to President Kimball, and as I listened to this choir sing these entreatings words, I am reminded of how significant charity is in the teachings of the Lord. He has said, “And above *all* things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace” (D&C 88:125; emphasis added).

I see a mantle as many of you care for each other in acts of tender compassion, ever striving for the highest, noblest, strongest kind of love—the pure love of Christ. Charity, or the pure love of Christ, is not synonymous with good deeds or benevolence. But kind, thoughtful, loving acts are the way Jesus has directed us to express our love—both our love for him and our love for others. If we have the sustenance, he says we are to give to those in want. If we are thoughtful, warm, and caring to those who are sick, those who mourn, those who are fatherless, those we love, *and* those who spitefully use us, then we have charity, for we are moved to act with compassion.

In Spanish the word *charity* means “the love that never ceases to be.” In Micronesia the word *love* translates into “the power to change lives.” These tender nuances give us a better understanding of the pure love of Christ. As we serve with the single desire to nurture all life, we come to know what charity means.

This seemed to be a characteristic of Ruth, whose feelings for Naomi are recorded in the Old Testament. Ruth was compassionate, even though the circumstances of her life were bitter. Bitter experiences come into the lives of all of us. Without the bitter, we cannot know the sweet. The prophet Lehi explained:

“For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, ... righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one.” (2 Ne. 2:11.)

Ruth knew this opposition. She was just a young woman when her husband died and left her alone without child. It was a bitter time, and yet there was the sweetness of her relationship with her mother-in-law and the strength of her faith in the God of Israel. Both had come into her life because of her marriage.

Ruth gleaned from the fields to sustain herself and Naomi. But more than what she gleaned from the fields were the experiences that came as she worked to thresh out the wheat from the chaff. At the end of her day she had great blessings because of her effort. This is the challenge we all face in our own lives. We too must glean from life’s circumstances and experiences that which will give us growth and faith and peace of mind.

There is no way that we can, or should want to, escape the challenges and struggles of mortality. How we struggle with them is our choice. The gospel plan gives us an eternal perspective that should help us have courage to be about our gleaning.

When Joseph Smith spoke to the sisters in those first Relief Society meetings in Nauvoo, he said: “After this instruction, you will be responsible for your own sins; it is a desirable honor ... to save yourselves; we are all responsible ... to save ourselves” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake

City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, p. 227).

Notice he did not say that having the knowledge would save them. He said that having the knowledge gave them the responsibility to do the work of saving themselves.

The Relief Society organization is prepared by the Lord to help us—his daughters—as we walk step by step toward perfection. Relief Society can be a guide, a strength, a light, a direction. Relief Society can teach us how to develop a love that never ceases. It provides us opportunities to demonstrate love by our actions. Relief Society will help us sort out truth from error in our modern world, of what Lehi called a compound of good and evil.

Tonight I have selected eight directives that I believe are crucial if we are to develop the bond of charity.

1. Our theme for this evening is—“learn, then teach.”
2. Be active in Relief Society.
3. Spread the gospel message.
4. Learn and live the principles of welfare work.
5. Be sensitive to life’s transition, both for yourself and for others.
6. Do quality visiting teaching.
7. Be a connecting link.
8. Value yourself.

If we all unite and become one sisterhood in our meetings and activities, together we can become instruments in the hands of God by which he can perform his work. We will be motivated to good works by the accepting, encouraging, ennobling love of Christ. My beloved sisters, “above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace” (D&C 88:125).

God grant that we may “learn, then teach” with receptive minds and clear purpose. May we be fully united in the bond of charity so that we can glean all of the blessings which the Lord has prepared for us from the foundation of the earth, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.