

is no happiness in sexual relations and physical familiarities outside the bonds of marriage, only degradation and increased momentum along the way to spiritual death.

There is no lasting happiness in what we possess. Happiness and joy come from what a person *is*, not from what he or she *possesses* or *appears to be*. Youth, hold fast to your standards. Study and use that saving pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*.

### Righteousness fosters righteousness

Righteousness fosters righteousness. The effects of righteous examples are felt for generations to come. Good parenting produces youth who make good parents. Just as many of us have been strengthened by the noble examples of our pioneering ancestors in many lands, so the righteous choices and sacrifices of our day can bless our families and our friends and our nations for all the years to come.

We appreciate the work of our *Church News* and our Church maga-

zines, which share worthy and wholesome examples for the strengthening of all. We are saddened by the negative examples highlighted in the media and in many other public communications. Examples are powerful. We should use them to build up, not to tear down.

I testify to you of the lasting happiness and ultimate joy of those who exercise faith in God and keep his commandments. I urge each of you to seek the joy that comes from keeping the commandments of God and exerting a righteous influence for the benefit of those we love.

I testify to the truth of God's promise that the faithful "shall enter into the joy of [the] Lord, and shall inherit eternal life" (D&C 51:19). I testify of God the Eternal Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, the authors of the great plan of happiness and mercy. I pray that we may do those things that are required for happiness and peace in this life and for joy and eternal life in the world to come, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Aileen H. Clyde

### What is charity?

One of the great blessings of my childhood was that my mother spent significant time reading to me and my younger brother Howard. She had a great sense of the importance of good books, and she used them to teach and entertain us. This all served to expand our limited young lives to matters far beyond our daily experience. The reading had begun when I was a runabout preschooler and Howard, who had been born with severe physical disabilities and could not run about, needed special attention. The blessing for me was that I got special attention too.

The books were wide-ranging and grew in sophistication as we grew. I re-

member nursery rhymes, poetry, folktales from Russia, the adventure in *Thunder Cave*—and the scriptures. Together we read parables, incidents such as the woman at the well, even the great abstractions.

One day Mother read:

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. . . .

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7–8; see also Moroni 7:45–46).

Howard interrupted the reading, as he often did, with a question: "What

is charity?" He wanted to know the meaning of what we had just heard; I was still caught up in the way it sounded. I only wanted to go on with the reading, but I could tell Mother was pleased with his inquisitiveness. She taught us then and later that good questions can be important if we are truly searching to understand and that sometimes good answers that are good enough may take a lifetime of looking. Then she put down the New Testament and read from the Book of Mormon:

"But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him [or her]" (Moroni 7:47).

There it was in one verse—the concentrated essence of a much larger whole, a definition given for a profound yet available truth. What I heard that day was clearly beyond my childhood comprehension, but the spirit of love was there and was as real as any of the other details of my young life.

### Who is my neighbor?

The scriptures give us examples of other questioners whose queries taught them new ways to think about love. In the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, Christ was asked by a Pharisee who wanted to trick him, what was the *greatest* commandment. Christ answered:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

In Luke's record, the lawyer who had asked the question wanted to know more. Perhaps he feared he might waste his love, so he asked, "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). And Christ gave the parable of the good Samaritan as an answer. The Samaritan saw what others with eyes had walked by without

seeing. He did what he *could* do that no one else *would* do, and he dignified himself and put us all in awe of him because we didn't expect the Samaritan to be our neighbor. (See Luke 10:30–37.) We wouldn't tempt Christ by asking him whom we should love or serve, but I think occasionally we wonder if we really know.

It is interesting to me that Jesus chose a Samaritan as an example of love unfeigned for the Pharisees. They were so remarkable for their observance of the letter of the law that this teaching must have caused at least some of them to see in new ways and with new spirit the freedom to love that Christ was offering them. That is the challenge for us—to allow Christ's teachings, magnified by the Holy Spirit, to guide us to *his* ways of seeing and being.

### Understanding charity is not easy

Now, understanding charity or being charitable is not easy. And our scriptures have not indicated that it would be. Even "charity suffereth long" requires our thoughtful interpretation. The suffering that may come from loving is the result of our great caring. It comes because another matters to us so much.

To avoid that kind of suffering, we would have to avoid what gives us life and hope and joy—our capacity to love deeply. As an antidote against the suffering that will surely come as we have loved ones die, or see them struggle or be misled, or have them misunderstand us or even betray us, we can find relief in charity to others. We accepted bearing one another's burdens and mourning with those who mourn as we accepted Christ in our baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–9). His spirit and power will comfort us as we extend ourselves in help and love to those who need us.

If charity is not always quick to our understanding, it may occasionally be quick to our misunderstanding. It is not charity or kindness to endure any type of abuse or unrighteousness that may be inflicted on us by others. God's commandment that as we love him we must respect ourselves suggests we must not accept disrespect from others. It is not charity to let another repeatedly deny our divine nature and agency. It is not charity to bow down in despair and helplessness. That kind of suffering should be ended, and that is very difficult to do alone. There are priesthood leaders and other loving servants who will give aid and strength when they *know* of the need. We must be willing to let others help us.

### Examples of charity

A striking feature of the effect of a deepened understanding of Christ's love is how such comprehension dignifies and lifts the individual to action. Julia Mavimbela, a Church member in Soweto, South Africa, tells how her conversion brought her from bitterness at her life's circumstances to faith and strength to help those around her and beyond her. She taught gardening to relieve hunger, and she organized women for peace to calm their strife-torn country.

In Thailand in the late 1970s, Sister Srilaxana worked as a translator of the scriptures five days a week and then traveled throughout her country at her own expense each weekend, visiting fledgling Relief Societies. These followers of Christ did what it was in their souls to do to serve God's children. They did what their individuality permitted, and their examples invite us to do the same.

### Relief Society's mission

Charitable, compassionate service is the central mission of our Church's

Relief Society organization. We are now nearly three million members worldwide, and we rejoice in our great, diversified sisterhood. We know that our society, which marks its 150th anniversary next year, has accomplished much good. We have learned that we can do *many* things together that would be impossible if we worked alone. But our major focus as a society is to bless the individual woman as she grows in her knowledge of Christ's gospel and reflects her knowledge by the choices she makes to serve others in righteousness.

At last October's conference, Bishop Glenn L. Pace admonished all of us to look around us to do what we could as individuals to relieve pain or loneliness or injustice in our own communities. He promised that if we did a compassion would enter our hearts, and through the Holy Ghost sanctification could take place within our souls and we would become more like our Savior (see Conference Report, Oct. 1990, pp. 7-10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, pp. 8-10).

I pray in all humility that our faith in God may move us to such action and that we may thus know by the Holy Spirit the meaning of charity so that we can exercise it in our lives, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Clyde of the Relief Society General Presidency. She was preceded by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve.

We shall now stand and sing together "O Ye Mountains High."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons, who was released yesterday after serving more than five years as a member of the Seventy, will then speak to us.

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The choir and congregation sang "O Ye Mountains High."

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