

One brother said, "Elder Tingey, how can I pay tithing when I have no income?" I inquired and determined that he had a large family of seven or eight children and was unemployed. I asked how he fed his family. He said he had a small garden and raised geese. I asked, "What do the geese do?" He replied, "They lay eggs." I responded, "What if one morning you discovered 10 geese eggs in the nests of your geese?" A light flickered on in his soul. "I could take one egg and give it to my branch president," he answered. He understood, and he could become a full-tithe payer.

Paying tithing brings a special peace

As we pay and teach our children to pay tithing, we develop a family that is deeply rooted in making and keeping temple covenants. The most glorious of all blessings we receive in this life and in the eternities are blessings that come from knowing that our families are sealed together for all eternity. Today some may find that they are denying themselves these privileges by their failure to pay tithing. To those who find themselves in

this situation, my counsel is to exercise your faith, prove the Lord herewith, and pay your tithing.

A special peace that will surpass all understanding will come to you and your family as you pay a full tithing. You will find that all fears concerning finances and care of family will diminish. You will come to know that your Heavenly Father loves you.

I am grateful that my parents taught me to pay tithing. I bear my humble testimony that paying tithing is a true principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 231.
2. See Genesis 14:18–20.
3. See Deuteronomy 12:6.
4. Malachi 3:8, 10.
5. Mark 12:41–44.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4.
7. Quoted in *Gospel Doctrine*, 229.
8. *Gospel Doctrine*, 229.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Sister Mary Ellen W. Smoot

Relief Society helps develop inner strength

On behalf of my counselors and the Relief Society general board, we acknowledge the members of the Church worldwide, and specifically the women, who through their faithfulness and devotion, make sacrifices of their time and talents to bless the lives of individuals and families around the world.

In the blessing President Gordon B. Hinckley gave me when I was set apart, he spoke of the service the Relief Society can render. He said, "This is a tremendous organization, perhaps the largest and oldest of its kind in all the world. Its mission is to do good and to help those in

distress and need, to bring about the processes of education, good homemaking, and other skills into the lives of women throughout the world."

We have as our guides the Relief Society declaration; home, family, and personal enrichment meetings; and the visiting teaching program. These tools have been carefully evaluated and are now in place to help sisters expand their inner strength through service and unity.

Inner strength of Susanna Stone Lloyd

To demonstrate the kind of inner strength I am talking about, I would like to share the story of Susanna Stone Lloyd,

who at the age of 26 left England in 1856 and traveled to Utah alone. The only member of her family to join the Church, Susanna was a member of the Willie handcart company. Like so many other pioneers, she endured life-threatening hunger, illness, and fatigue.

Upon arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Susanna borrowed a mirror to make herself more presentable. Despite her best efforts, she recounts: "I shall never forget how I looked. Some of my old friends did not know me."¹ Having sold her own mirror to an Indian for a piece of buffalo meat, she had not spent much time looking at herself. Now she did not recognize her own image. She was a different person, both inside and out. Over the course of rocky ridges and extreme hardship came a deep conviction. Her faith had been tried, and her conversion was concrete. She had been refined in ways that the very best mirror could not reflect. Susanna had prayed for strength and found it—deep within her soul.

How to build inner strength

This is the kind of inner strength I would like to talk about. How do you and I become so converted to the truth, so full of faith, so dependent on God that we are able to meet trials and even be strengthened by them?

It does not take much living to find out that life almost never turns out the way you planned it. Adversity and affliction come to everyone. Do you know anyone who would not like to change something about themselves or their circumstances? And yet I am sure you know many who go forward with faith. You are drawn to those people, inspired by them, and even strengthened by their examples.

Over the past five years I have met with sisters from Africa to Spain who are pioneers in their own right. I have marveled at their inner strength, and I have been inspired by the depth of their tes-

timonies. These are sisters who live the truths that the Relief Society declaration affirms.

The declaration reminds us of who we really are and why we do the things we do. The more we live by its precepts, the more inner strength we will have. We will mirror our beliefs. Fasting, prayer, and scripture study impact our relationship with the Savior. I would like to highlight two more ways we can develop inner strength.

Serving others builds inner strength

When we are truly converted, our focus shifts from self to others. We can find inner strength through service. Nothing would please the adversary more than for us to be distracted by selfish concerns and appetites. But we know better. Service will help us to stay on course.

At women's conferences; at home, family, and personal enrichment meetings; and most importantly in our own homes I have been inspired by your acts of service.

Just a few weeks ago I received a call from the Area President in the Europe Central Area. He said the members and missionaries in Albania and Moldova were so cold, and he wondered if the Relief Society might have any quilts to send their way. Imagine the joy I felt as I visited with Humanitarian Service and discovered that we could donate 1,000 quilts. Within days they were packaged and sent. The mission president wrote, "Members here were touched that other members would be thinking of them." Thank you for your selfless service.

Sisters, take a close look at the suggested topics for home, family, and personal enrichment meeting and find ways to build spiritual strength, develop personal skills, strengthen the home and family, and provide gospel service. By so doing, we will become less preoccupied with our problems and more dependent on God.

Being united builds inner strength

Another way we can develop inner strength is by striving for unity in our families, stakes, wards, and presidencies. The Lord Himself taught, "If ye are not one ye are not mine."²

Unity of purpose, thought, and feeling are exalting qualities. When we can put aside our differences and value each other's strengths, great things happen. The Prophet Joseph Smith admonished: "Don't be limited in your views with regard to your neighbor's virtue . . . ; you must enlarge your souls towards each other."³ Such generosity of spirit invites greater unity.

I have visited stakes and wards that are united. The auxiliary presidencies are supporting each other and coordinating their efforts; they are sustaining their priesthood leaders and together striving to bring families to Christ. As the kingdom of God rolls forth, we must unite our efforts in saving souls.

As a Relief Society general presidency we are grateful for the new emphasis in visiting teaching.⁴ The new messages invite sisters to read from their scriptures and from the teachings of the First Presidency and other General Authorities about a principle of the gospel. Sisters are then encouraged to share insights and experiences about how living the principle has blessed their lives.

Sisters, if you will follow this format, you will feel more unity with your companion and with those you teach. You will be strengthened spiritually.

Great inner strength of women

No matter our circumstances, who of us can afford to waste our life in front of the mirrors of self-pity and discouragement? Yes, as the Apostle Paul admonished, we all need to examine ourselves⁵ from time to time. We all need to repent,

recognize our weaknesses, and more fully come unto Christ. Like Susanna, we may have to sell our looking glass in order to cross the plains of pain, sorrow, and discouragement. But as we do, we will discover God-given strengths that we may not have otherwise known.

President Joseph F. Smith spoke with great feeling of the inner strength of pioneer women. He said:

"Death was nothing to them. Hardship was nothing. Cold or rain, or heat, was nothing to them. All they felt and knew and desired was the triumph of the kingdom of God and the truth that the Lord had given to them." And then, with all the sincerity of a prophet of God, he pled, "My soul, where are these women now?"⁶

I am here today to witness to you that such women are all around the world in the Relief Societies of the Church. I am grateful beyond measure for the opportunity that is mine to see these women in our time who have "waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth."⁷ With all my heart I know that the Lord can "make weak things become strong."⁸ I know this is His work and His kingdom. I know that each of us can mirror the Savior by the way we choose to live our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Carol Cornwall Madsen, comp., *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail* (1997), 634.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 228.
4. See General Relief Society Presidency, "For Such a Time as This," *Ensign*, Jan. 2002, 64–66.
5. See 1 Corinthians 11:28.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 189.
7. Alma 17:2.
8. Ether 12:27.