

What Shall We Do?

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We build the kingdom when we nurture others. We also build the kingdom when we speak up and testify of truth.

Soon after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, the Apostle Peter taught, "Let all ... know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The listeners were stricken in their hearts and asked Peter and the others, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"¹ And they subsequently obeyed Peter's teachings with gladness.

Tomorrow is Easter Sunday, and I hope that we also are stricken in our hearts to acknowledge the Savior, repent, and obey with gladness.

In this general conference, we will hear inspired direction given by Church leaders, both male and female. Knowing that our hearts will be touched by their words, I ask you tonight, "Women and sisters, what shall we do?"

The Relief Society general president Eliza R. Snow declared to sisters almost 150 years ago, "The Lord has laid high responsibilities upon us."² I testify that her declaration is still true today.

The Lord's Church needs Spirit-directed women who use their unique gifts to nurture, to speak up, and to defend gospel truth. Our inspiration and intuition are necessary parts of building the kingdom of God, which really means doing our part to bring salvation to God's children.

Building the Kingdom through Nurturing

We build the kingdom when we nurture others. However, the first child of God we must build up in the restored gospel is ourselves. Emma Smith said, "I desire the Spirit of God to know and understand myself, that I might be able to overcome whatever of tradition or nature that would not tend to my exaltation."³

We must develop bedrock faith in the Savior's gospel and move forward, empowered by temple covenants, toward exaltation.

What if some of our traditions don't have a place in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ? Letting go of them may require the emotional support and nurture of another, as it did for me.

When I was born, my parents planted a magnolia tree in the backyard so there would be magnolias at my wedding ceremony, held in the Protestant church of my forefathers. But on the day of my marriage, there were no parents at my side and no magnolias, for as a one-year convert to the Church, I had traveled to Salt Lake City, Utah, to receive my temple endowment and be sealed to David, my fiancé.

When I left Louisiana and neared Utah, a feeling of homelessness swept over me. Before the wedding, I would be staying with David's step-grandmother, who was lovingly known as Aunt Carol.

Here I was, a stranger to Utah, going to stay in a stranger's house before being sealed—for eternity—to a family I barely knew. (Good thing I loved and trusted my future husband and the Lord!)

As I stood at the front door of Aunt Carol's house, I wanted to shrink away. The door opened—I stood there like a scared rabbit—and Aunt Carol, without a word, reached out and took me into her arms. She, who had no children of her own, knew—her nurturing heart knew—that I needed a place to belong. Oh, the comfort and sweetness of that moment! My fear melted, and there came to me a sense of being anchored to a spiritually safe place.

Love is making space in your life for someone else, as Aunt Carol did for me.

Mothers literally make room in their bodies to nurture an unborn baby—and hopefully a place in their hearts as they raise them—but nurturing is not limited to bearing children. Eve was called a “mother” before she had children.⁴ I believe that “to mother” means “to give life.” Think of the many ways you give life. It could mean giving emotional life to the hopeless or spiritual life to the doubter. With the help of the Holy Ghost, we can create an emotionally healing place for the discriminated against, the rejected, and the stranger. In these tender yet powerful ways, we build the kingdom of God. Sisters, all of us came to earth with these life-giving, nurturing, maternal gifts because that is God's plan.

Following His plan and becoming a builder of the kingdom require selfless sacrifice. Elder Orson F. Whitney wrote: “All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, ... purifies our hearts ... and makes us

more tender and charitable, ... and it is through ... toil and tribulation, that we gain the education ... which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.”⁵ These purifying trials bring us to Christ, who can heal us and make us useful in the work of salvation.

Building the Kingdom through Speaking and Testifying

We also build the kingdom when we speak up and testify of truth. We follow the Lord’s pattern. He speaks and teaches with power and authority of God. Sisters, we can too. Women generally love to talk and gather! As we work by delegated priesthood authority given to us, our talking and gathering grow into gospel teaching and leading.

Sister Julie B. Beck, former Relief Society general president, taught: “The ability to qualify for, receive, and act on personal revelation is the single most important skill that can be acquired in this life. ... It requires a conscious effort.”⁶

Personal revelation from the Holy Ghost will prompt us to learn, speak, and act on eternal truth—the Savior’s truth. The more we follow Christ, the more we will feel His love and direction; the more we feel His love and direction, the more we will want to speak and teach truth as He did, even when we face opposition.

Some years ago, I prayed for the words to defend motherhood when I received an anonymous phone call.

The caller asked, “Are you Neill Marriott, the mother of a big family?”

I answered happily, “Yes!” expecting to hear her say something like, “Well, that’s good!”

But no! I’ll never forget her reply as her voice crackled over the phone: “I am highly offended that you would bring children onto this overcrowded planet!”

“Oh,” I sputtered, “I see how you feel.”

She snapped, “No—you don’t!”

I then whimpered, “Well, maybe I don’t.”

She started on a rant about my foolish choice to be a mother. As she went on, I began to pray for help, and a gentle thought came to mind: “What would the Lord say to her?” I then felt I was standing on solid ground and gained courage at the thought of Jesus Christ.

I replied, "I am glad to be a mother, and I promise you I will do everything in my power to nurture my children in such a way that they will make the world a better place."

She replied, "Well, I hope you do!" and hung up.

It wasn't a big thing—after all, I was standing safely in my own kitchen! But in my own small way, I was able to speak in defense of family, mothers, and nurturers because of two things: (1) I understood and believed God's doctrine of the family, and (2) I prayed for words to convey these truths.

Being distinct and different from the world will draw some criticism, but we must anchor ourselves to eternal principles and testify of them, no matter the world's response.

When we ask ourselves, "What shall we do?" let's ponder this question: "What does the Savior do continually?" He nurtures. He creates. He encourages growth and goodness. Women and sisters, we can do these things! Primary girls, is there someone in your family who needs your love and kindness? You build the kingdom by nurturing others too.

The Savior's creation of the earth, under the direction of His Father, was a mighty act of nurturing. He provided a place for us to grow and develop faith in His atoning power. Faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement is the ultimate place of healing and hope, growth and purpose. All of us need a spiritual and physical place of belonging. We, sisters of all ages, can create this; it is even a holy place.

Our high responsibility is to become women who follow the Savior, nurture with inspiration, and live truth fearlessly. As we ask Father in Heaven to make us builders of His kingdom, His power will flow into us and we will know how to nurture, ultimately becoming like our heavenly parents. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.