

Certain Women

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By Linda K. Burton

Relief Society General President

Certain women are disciples centered in the Savior Jesus Christ and have hope through the promise of His atoning sacrifice.

My beloved sisters, how we love you and thank you for your tenderhearted and enthusiastic response to the First Presidency's invitation and the #IWasAStranger effort. Please keep praying, listening to the whisperings of the Spirit, and acting on the promptings you receive.

Whether I travel locally or throughout the world, it is not unusual for someone to ask, "Do you remember me?" Because I am painfully imperfect, I must admit I often can't remember names. However, I do remember the very real love Heavenly Father has allowed me to feel as I meet His precious daughters and sons.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit some beloved women who are in prison. As we said our heartfelt goodbyes, one darling woman pleaded, "Sister Burton, please don't forget us." I hope she and others who want to be remembered will feel so as I share a few thoughts with you.

Certain Women in the Savior's Day: Centered in the Savior Jesus Christ

Our sisters across the ages have demonstrated the faithful pattern of discipleship that we too strive for. "The New Testament includes accounts of [certain] women, named and unnamed, who exercised faith in Jesus Christ [and in His Atonement], learned and lived His teachings, and testified of His ministry, miracles, and majesty. These women became exemplary disciples and important witnesses in the work of salvation."¹

Consider these accounts in the book of Luke. First, during the Savior's ministry:

"And it came to pass ... that [Jesus] went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

"And *certain women*, ... Mary called Magdalene, ... and Joanna ... , and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him."²

Next, following His Resurrection:

"And *certain women* ... which were early at the sepulchre;

"... When they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had ... seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive."³

I have read and passed over the seemingly unremarkable expression "certain women" numerous times before, but recently as I pondered more carefully, those words seemed to jump off the page. Consider these synonyms of one meaning of the word *certain* as connected to faithful, *certain women*: "convinced," "positive," "confident," "firm," "definite," "assured," and "dependable."⁴

As I pondered those powerful descriptors, I remembered two of those New Testament *certain women* who bore positive, confident, firm, assured testimonies of the Savior. Though they, like us, were imperfect women, their witness is inspiring.

Remember the unnamed woman at the well who invited others to come and see what she had learned of the Savior? She bore her *certain* witness in the form of a question: "Is not this the Christ?"⁵ Her testimony and invitation were so compelling that "many ... believed on him."⁶

Following the death of her brother, Lazarus, Martha, the beloved disciple and friend of the Lord, declared with what must have been great emotion, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Consider her certainty as she continued, "*But I know*, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She further testified, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."⁷

We learn from these sisters that *certain women* are disciples centered in the Savior Jesus Christ and have hope through the promise of His atoning sacrifice.

Certain Covenant-Keeping Women of the Restoration: Willing to Sacrifice

Anciently, *certain women* sacrificed as they testified and lived the teachings of Jesus. *Certain women* in the early days of the Restoration did the same. Drusilla Hendricks and her family were among those who, as new converts, suffered during the persecution of the Saints in Clay County, Missouri. Her husband was permanently paralyzed during the Battle of Crooked River. She was left to care for him as well as provide for her family.

"At one particularly distressing time, when the family was out of food, she remembered that a voice told her, 'Hold on, for the Lord will provide.'"

When her son was needed to volunteer for the Mormon Battalion, at first Drusilla resisted and wrestled in prayer with Heavenly Father until "it was as though a voice

said to her, 'Do you not want the highest glory?' She answered naturally, 'Yes,' and the voice continued, 'How do you think to gain it save by making the greatest sacrifices?'"⁸

We learn from this *certain woman* that covenant-keeping discipleship requires our willingness to sacrifice.

Certain Women Today: Remembering and Preparing to Celebrate His Return

I have mentioned *certain women* in the Savior's day and in the early days of the Restoration of the gospel, but what about examples of discipleship and testimonies of *certain women* in our own day?

On my recent assignment to Asia, I was once again inspired by the many *certain women* I met. I was particularly impressed with first-generation members in India, Malaysia, and Indonesia who strive to live the gospel culture in their own homes, sometimes at great sacrifice, as gospel living often clashes with family and country cultures. The multigenerational *certain women* I met in Hong Kong and Taiwan continue to bless the lives of their families, Church members, and communities by remaining centered in the Savior and willingly sacrificing to keep covenants. Similar *certain women* are found throughout the Church.

A *certain woman* who has blessed my life for decades has battled for the past 15 years the debilitating, difficult, and progressive disease called inclusion body myositis. Though confined to her wheelchair, she strives to be grateful and keeps up her "Can Can List": a running list of things she *can* do, such as I can breathe, I can swallow, I can pray, and I can feel my Savior's love. She bears her Christ-centered *certain* witness almost daily to family and friends.

I recently heard Jenny's story. She is a returned missionary whose parents divorced while she was serving her mission. She told how the thought of returning home "scared [her] to death." But at the end of her mission to Italy, as she stopped in the mission home on her way home to the United States, a *certain woman*, the mission president's wife, tenderly ministered to her simply by brushing her hair.

Years later, another *certain woman*, Terry—a stake Relief Society president and disciple of Jesus Christ—blessed Jenny's life when Jenny was called as a ward Relief Society president. At that time, Jenny was working on her dissertation for her doctoral degree. Not only did Terry serve as a mentor to Jenny as a leader, but she also sat with her for 10 hours at the hospital when Jenny received the alarming diagnosis of leukemia. Terry visited the hospital and drove Jenny to appointments. Jenny confessed, "I think I may have thrown up several times in her car."

Despite her illness, Jenny continued to serve valiantly as the ward Relief Society president. Even in her extremity, she made phone calls and sent texts and emails from

her bed, and she invited sisters to come see her. She mailed cards and notes to people, loving her sisters from a distance. When her ward requested a photograph of her presidency for their ward history, this is what they got. Because Jenny is a *certain woman* herself, she invited all to share others' burdens, including her own.

As a *certain woman*, Jenny testified: "Not only are we here to save others but to save ourselves. And that salvation comes from partnering with Jesus Christ, from understanding His grace and His Atonement and His feelings of love for the women of the Church. That happens through things as simple as brushing someone's hair; sending a note with an inspired, clear, revelatory message of hope and grace; or allowing women to serve us."⁹

Sisters, when we have become distracted, doubtful, discouraged, sinful, sorrowful, or soul-stretched, may we accept the Lord's invitation to drink of His living water, as did the *certain woman* at the well, inviting others to do the same as we bear our own *certain witness*: "Is not this the Christ?"

When life seems unfair, as it must have seemed to Martha at the death of her brother—when we experience the heartaches of loneliness, infertility, loss of loved ones, missing opportunities for marriage and family, broken homes, debilitating depression, physical or mental illness, stifling stress, anxiety, addiction, financial hardship, or a plethora of other possibilities—may we remember Martha and declare our similar *certain witness*: "*But I know ... [and] I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God.*"

May we remember the many *certain women* who refused to abandon our precious Savior during the excruciating experience He suffered on the cross and yet hours later were privileged to be among the *certain witnesses* of His glorious Resurrection. Let us be found staying close to Him in prayer and scripture study. Let us draw ourselves near to Him by preparing for and partaking of the sacred emblems of His atoning sacrifice weekly during the ordinance of the sacrament and as we keep covenants by serving others in their times of need. Perhaps then we might be part of the *certain women*, disciples of Jesus Christ, who will celebrate His glorious return when He comes again.

Sisters, I testify of loving Heavenly Parents; of our Savior, Jesus Christ; and of His infinite Atonement in our behalf. I know the Prophet Joseph Smith was foreordained as the prophet of the Restoration. I know the Book of Mormon is true and was translated by the power of God. We have been blessed with a living prophet in our own day, President Thomas S. Monson. Of these truths I am *certain!* In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

