

Charity: One Family, One Home at a Time

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Some years ago my husband and I visited the eastern sector of Berlin, Germany. Chunks of what was once the infamous wall dividing the citizens of that city were lying about—preserved as a memorial to the triumph of freedom over bondage. Written on one piece of the wall in bold, uneven red letters were these words: “*Many small people in many small places doing many small things can alter the face of the earth.*” To me that phrase speaks of what each of us—as covenant women—can do to make a difference as we step forward offering our hearts and hands to the Lord by lifting and loving others.

It matters not whether we are new converts or lifelong members; single, married, divorced, or widowed; whether we’re rich, poor, educated, or uneducated; living in a modern city or in the most remote jungle village. We, as covenant women, have consecrated ourselves to the cause of Christ through our baptismal and temple covenants. We can alter the face of the earth *one family and one home at a time* through charity, our small and simple acts of pure love.

Charity, the Savior’s pure love, is the “highest, noblest, strongest kind of love,”¹ which we “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart”² to possess. Elder Dallin H. Oaks teaches us that charity “is not an *act* but a *condition* or state of being [one becomes].”³ Our day-to-day offerings of charity are “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; ... in [the] fleshy tables of [our] heart[s].”⁴ Little by little our charitable acts change our natures, define our characters, and ultimately make us women with the courage and commitment to say to the Lord, “Here am I; send me.”

As our exemplar, the Savior showed us what charity means through His own actions. Besides ministering to multitudes, Jesus demonstrated the depth of His love and care for His family. Even while suffering terrible agony on the cross, He thought of His mother and her needs:

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. ...

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

“Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

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I find it touching that this scripture shows the depth of John’s devotion to Mary by saying that he “took her unto

his own home.” I believe the most important acts of charity are small and simple in nature, eternal in consequence, and are rendered within the walls of our own homes.

As we try to deal patiently and lovingly every day with fussy babies, challenging teenagers, difficult roommates, less-active spouses, or elderly, disabled parents, we may ask ourselves: “Is what I am doing really important? Does it matter or make a difference?” Dear sisters, what you are doing with your families *matters!* It matters so very, very much. Daily, each of us learns and relearns at home that charity, the Savior’s pure love, never faileth. So many Relief Society sisters do great good serving in their families. These faithful women do not receive the praise of the world—nor do they seek it—but “of some have compassion, making a difference.”⁶

Who are these women who make a difference? In Nauvoo our early Relief Society sisters, in the midst of grinding poverty, opened their hearts and welcomed into their homes many new converts streaming into the city. They shared their food, their clothing, and more important, *they shared their faith* in the redeeming love of the Savior.

In our times, Sister Knell is a covenant woman who makes a difference. She is a widow in her 80s with a 47-year-old son, mentally and physically disabled from birth. A few years ago this dear sister set out to do what seemed impossible to everyone else—to teach her son Keith to read. Learning to read was his greatest desire, but doctors had said Keith was incapable of reading. With faith in her heart and a desire to bless her son’s life, this humble widow said to her son, “I know Heavenly Father will bless you so you can read the Book of Mormon.”

Sister Knell wrote the following: “It was hard work for Keith, and it wasn’t easy for me, either. At first there were some bad days, because I got upset. It has been a time-consuming, word-by-word struggle. I sit by his side each morning. I point to each word with a pencil to help him stay on track. After seven long years and one month, Keith finally finished reading the Book of Mormon.” His mother said, “Hearing him read a verse without help is a thrill I just cannot put into words.” She testifies, “I know miracles do happen when we put our trust in the Lord.”

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Throughout the world in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, North and South America, and Europe, charitable women, united with their families, also make a difference in their communities. On the tiny island of Trinidad, Sister Ramoutar, a busy branch Relief Society president, and her family are helping neighborhood children. The Ramoutars live in a village that is a “drug-infested” place where many parents and adults are addicted to alcohol or are trafficking in drugs. The children are at great risk and are often without supervision. Many do not attend school.

Every Thursday night, as many as 30 children, ages 3 to 19 years, sit in the covered area outside of the Ramoutar home, eagerly participating in a group known as “Our One Big Happy Family.” Prayers, hymns, fun songs, and the sharing of good deeds done by the children each week are part of the activities. Sometimes doctors, policemen, teachers, or our own missionaries share useful lessons such as President Gordon B. Hinckley’s six B’s. The Ramoutar family rescues children through their small and simple acts of charity. As they have shared the gospel in their “One Big Happy Family,” others have joined the Church.

Beloved Relief Society sisters, I know that wherever we live, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, we, as covenant women, united in righteousness, can alter the face of the earth. I testify as did Alma that “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass.”⁸ In our homes, those small and simple things—our daily acts of charity—proclaim our conviction, “Here am I; send me.”

I leave my witness that the greatest act of charity in time and all eternity was the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He willingly laid down His life to atone for my sins and yours. I express my devotion to His cause and my desire to serve Him always, wherever He calls me, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Bible Dictionary, 632.

2. Moro. 7:48.

3. “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 34; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 42.

4. 2 Cor. 3:3.

5. John 19:25–27.

6. Jude 1:22.

7. Letter on file in the Relief Society offices.

8. Alma 37:6.