

A VISITING TEACHING LESSON FROM LOIS

By Dayle King Searle

I had often heard that everyone has something to offer. But was it true of an elderly sister who was homebound by severe health problems?

While I was expecting my fifth child, my visiting teacher was an older woman named Lois. She had not been active in the Church for most of her life but had come back a few years earlier. She had a great enthusiasm and love for the gospel, particularly for the temple and visiting teaching.

Because of years of smoking, her health was in decline. She had to be on oxygen all the time, and she was almost completely homebound. Lois was heartbroken at the prospect of not being able to visit teach, so our Relief Society presidency came up with a plan: instead of Lois coming to our homes, we would go to hers. I enjoyed visiting with Lois. Each time I went, I was impressed by her sincerity and humility.

When I was six months along in my pregnancy, the Braxton Hicks contractions I normally felt in my pregnancies became steadier and

stronger. Because of problems I'd had in previous pregnancies, my doctor became concerned. He prescribed some medicine that would help stop the contractions but told me that it would be better to take it easy.

I knew he was right, but as I left his office, I thought about the week ahead. In addition to the normal activities of caring for my young family, I was hosting a baby shower for a friend. We were having carpet installed in our home, and the room it was going in needed to be painted first. It was also harvest season, and my husband, a farmer, was leaving each morning before dawn and not returning until after dark. I took most of his meals to him in the field. As much as I knew I needed to be cautious, "taking it easy" just wasn't feasible.

Unfortunately, the pills I had been prescribed made me feel jittery, nervous, and drained, and if I exerted

myself too much, I still experienced contractions. I had to rethink my plan.

My husband began taking sack lunches. I simplified my plans for the baby shower and involved my children in the cleaning before the event. And I hired a neighbor girl to help with the painting.

Even so, the week was emotionally trying as I struggled to know my limits. I had to take things a day at a time. "If it's this bad at six months," I wondered, "what will it be like at seven or eight?"

In the midst of this, Lois called me to ask when I was going to come to her home so that she could visit teach me. I normally visited Lois early in the month, but with all of our busyness, Lois now seemed like just another demand on me.

"It's been a hectic week," I said. "I might be able to come Thursday or Friday." When she asked what time, I told her I would call her on



Thursday to tell her if it would work out.

When I hung up the phone I felt a lot of self-pity. I thought, "Aren't visiting teachers supposed to help the women they visit? I go to Lois for *her* benefit, not *mine*. I may end up on bed rest, and what could my visiting teacher possibly do for me?"

On Thursday morning I had to go to town. I called Lois and let her know that I would be coming to see her.

Lois invited me in and we sat at her kitchen table. She read the visiting

teaching message to me, as she did each month, in her labored, breathless voice. Afterward, we visited for a few minutes. Lois asked how my pregnancy was going, and I explained the situation.

"Have you put your name in the temple?" Lois asked.

Her words surprised me. "No," I replied. In all of my worrying, I hadn't even thought of it.

"Would you like me to call and put your name in?" she offered.

I was humbled. Here I had thought that I went to see Lois for her benefit

and that there was nothing she could do for me. Now I realized what she had to offer was of greater worth than all the meals or housework another visiting teacher might have provided. Lois was offering me her faith. I left her home that day feeling comforted and more confident than I had all week.

Not long after this incident, Lois passed away. Many years later I still remember the lesson I learned at her kitchen table: all of God's children have something to offer. ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.