

Latter-day Saint Women Podcast Transcript

Dorah Mkhabela and Thembi Mkhabela Carter | Saying Yes to Service in South Africa

SHALYN.

Hello, and welcome to the Latter-day Saint Women podcast, where we share the legacy of women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You'll get to know the faithful women who shaped our past and hear from inspiring women of faith today. I'm Shalyn Back.

KARLIE.

And I'm Karlie Guymon. We're your cohosts. And today we are so excited to welcome Dorah Mkhabela and her daughter Thembi Mkhabela Carter as our guests. Sisters, welcome to the podcast.

DORAH AND THEMBI.

Thank you.

DORAH.

We're excited.

KARLIE.

We are so excited to have Dorah and Thembi with us today. Dorah is with us virtually from South Africa, and Thembi is here in the studio in Salt Lake City. And we're excited to share kind of the miraculous story that made this recording possible. But first, we want to introduce Dorah and Thembi. As a brief introduction, Dorah Mkhabela serves as the temple matron of the Johannesburg South Africa Temple. She and her husband, Jackson, are from Johannesburg, and they joined the Church in the early 90s before Thembi was born. Dorah has served in many leadership callings in the Church, including on the Young Women



general board under the direction of President Bonnie Oscarson. So we're excited to hear more about your service.

We have been planning an interview with Dorah for a few months, but we didn't know that Thembi was her daughter until just last week. So Thembi moved to Utah from South Africa last year, and she actually lives in my ward in Salt Lake City with her husband, Andrew. And as we were getting ready for this interview, I just kept getting the nudge that I needed to ask Thembi if she knew Dorah. And I knew there were thousands of Church members in South Africa, but I wondered if they knew each other or had a connection. So I was shocked to learn that yes, Thembi knows Dorah. She's her daughter. So we're so excited to have this mom/daughter interview today to get more of a complete picture of Dorah and Thembi's contributions as women of faith in South Africa. So again, welcome. Thank you, both, so much for being here.

THEMBI.

Thanks for having us.

SHALYN.

It's such a small world, and this is so fun. Dorah, you told us that you and your husband made a decision early in your Church membership to always say yes to opportunities to serve the Lord. And Thembi shared with us that you have been such great examples to her of humility and obedience. Dorah, how did you gain such a deep commitment to obedience and service? And can you just share an example of when saying yes to serve seemed either impossible or terrifying but blessed your life?

DORAH.

I think it's a combination of several factors. Growing up, I had a mom who was always in action to serve. She was not a member of any church, but I've seen her serving her immediate family, serving extended family—both my father's side and my mom's side. But what I remember most is that my aunt in December of '81, she was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer. And they told her that she needs to go back home and wait for her day. So my mom left us for the whole month of December. Can you imagine? Festive season, and you know what kind of patient you take care of when a person is in stage four. So my aunt passed on the 6th of January. So I have since learned service from my mom. She didn't serve those who were close to her only—anybody, our neighbors. I still



remember she identified one family where we used to take food every Monday for them to eat because they lacked. That is one of the things, and that rubbed on me.

So it became natural. When we joined the Church, I could see it made sense for me that in the Church, you have to sacrifice to serve like the missionaries do. And most of them were coming from North America; some were coming from West Africa and all that. That made me to be interested. And there were two couples who were sent by the stake to mentor us. They left their kids back in their wards to come and serve us. So that rubbed also on me. I think it was around about 2000, my husband was working for Technical SA—now it's known as the University of South Africa. He was doing well. He was coming from Washington, DC to be trained by FBI and all that. So one—I don't know. It was a brother who said, "Can you please apply? There's a position in the Church." And my husband said, "No, I can't."

And one day he came back, he said, "You know, maybe"—because we're still new in the Church, you know. And he said, "Maybe this is connected with our callings. Maybe I need to agree while serving in the stake presidency." And that is how we joined Church employment.

KARLIE.

You just jumped in.

DORAH.

Yeah, we jumped in. And every day, if they called us, we agreed. I still remember when I had my last child, Nyikiwe, I knocked—when I came back, I knocked at the bishop's office, and I said, "Bishop, I need work. I need a calling." So the question is that did I feel? Yes, I have accepted callings with trepidation. And one calling that I remember is when I was called to serve as a young single adult Sunday School teacher. I think 95 percent of those young single adults were returned missionaries. And after accepting the calling, going home, I was like, "What am I going to tell these young people? Because they've served missions; they've studied the scriptures for two years. What am I going to do?"

But I knelt down, and I prayed to my Heavenly Father to give me direction as to how to handle the situation. And I prepared. And one



day, I had an inspiration. I called this young man, and I said, “Can you please read?” He said, “No, I don’t have scriptures.”

So after that class, I said, “Every Sunday, you bring your scriptures.” He didn’t bring them. And then after our meetings, I called him. I said, “Why don’t you bring scriptures?” He said, “No, I can’t read. I’m dyslexic.” I said, “Okay, so this is what we’re going to do. I’m going to assign you reading assignments beforehand—a week or two—and then you practice at home, and then you come and read with us.”

KARLIE.

And you were a teacher by profession, right?

DORAH.

Yes. So this young man, he didn’t have confidence. But I tell you, he went and served a mission. And I think those are one of the blessings that I remember.

SHALYN.

What I love about this is it seems so simple to say yes. That’s a simple thing, to say yes. But then everything that follows, that’s so much work. It’s been so much effort for you. And then it’s amazing that you’ve been able to see those blessings that have come from that service, because that can’t be easy.

DORAH.

Yes, it’s not easy, but I think the way we started in the Church, it helped a lot. We were taught by this great man in our investigators class, David Beep. He encouraged us to prepare. We prepared like school kids. And when we participated, he acknowledged us like we were in Primary. And it motivated us, and that is what made us to love the scriptures, to love preparing. To be honest with you, it’s rare I’ll go to Church without preparing because I know that what I’m going to say, it can bless someone. So I prepare at home, and I rely on the Spirit.

SHALYN.

That’s amazing.



KARLIE.

Yeah.

SHALYN.

Well, and then Thembi, since we have you here, we would love to know what was it like for you and your siblings to grow up in a home with parents that were so dedicated to serving and sacrificing the Lord? I'd love to know how you've seen them support each other and then find balance in serving the Church while raising their family.

KARLIE.

I shared this with Karlie. They are the most secretive people I've ever known in my entire life. They are like international super spies, and they loved to ensure that we knew what we could do and what they were doing. And we were able to watch from a distance without having to be concerned about anything that they were doing. And I remember the time my dad got called as a stake president, and they sat us down and told us what he was doing, and then that was it. But I still didn't know what was going on by the time we went to church. I didn't understand what that calling meant for other people, but I knew that this was something that they needed to dedicate their time to. As well as—like my mom also receiving her callings, we'd sit down, we'd talk about it, and then we'd go about our daily lives as if nothing happened. And I always find that as a blessing because it helped us just feel like members who needed to go to church and go and make sure that we contributed the way that we needed to as members of the Church. And we weren't the stake president's kid or the Young Women board's kid. It was, "I'm Thembi, and I need to contribute at church." And they always made sure they had that for us.

I think the other thing that is so true, I would never see my parents not prepare for Sunday. Our kitchen is sort of an open plan into the dining room. And I, without fail, would see my mom with her scriptures almost nearly Monday to Sunday preparing for church, and my dad would do the same thing. And so it became so natural for us as children to understand the importance of the scriptures, to know where to look for answers, and also feel very comfortable to ask them questions. We'd always have discussions after Church, especially if we didn't understand something at church or we had questions about it. Sometimes I'd write them down in my phone, and I'd be like, "Okay, I'm going to ask Mom this." Exactly.



So it was the kind of environment that was conducive for learning, and so I really appreciated that.

But I think the one thing I really enjoyed, especially in later callings that my parents received and specifically when my mom got a calling to the Young Women board, I kind of remember them doing everything together, and I was like, “That’s cool. It’s a whole big partnership.” And it was a matter of making sure my mom was able to fulfill her calling and my dad, being able to support him in his calling. And I absolutely loved seeing that, because you get older and you start to understand, but when we’re younger, we’re just oblivious and unaware. But I know that we had a home that was centered around learning about the gospel. And it was mainly due to the level of preparation they had for every single Sunday.

SHALYN.

That’s incredible.

KARLIE.

Yeah.

SHALYN.

Thanks for sharing. That’s just such a beautiful family culture and family legacy.

KARLIE.

And I love that idea of constant study and preparation and, Dorah, what you said about realizing, “What I have to contribute can bless and lift other people. So if I am prepared to have the Spirit with me, the Lord can use me as an instrument to bless and help other people.”

DORAH.

Yes, that is true. And there’s a quote by Neal A. Maxwell. He says, “It should be clear to us with various callings and assignments that as soon as we are sustained and set apart, the clock begins running towards the moment of our release.” So it has stayed in my head and mind and heart that each and every second comes, and I’ll not get this opportunity again. It’s not possible. So I need to magnify my calling; I need to enjoy my



calling. You enjoy because you are in it. You want to give it your all. I think also the Lord takes His best—you're not like the best 100 percent, but I think you are His best at that moment. And you cannot afford to disappoint Him. So you need to do your best.

KARLIE.

Thank you for sharing that and for sharing your commitment. Now Dorah, we want to talk, as we mentioned in the introduction and as Thembi has referenced, that you had this wonderful opportunity to serve on what we then called the Young Women general board under the direction of President Bonnie Oscarson and her presidency. Tell us a little bit more about this opportunity, your responsibilities, and then, of course, the perspectives you were able to share with the presidency, who was based in Salt Lake City, from your location in South Africa.

DORAH.

So I had never served in the Young Women. It was my first time.

KARLIE.

Which is amazing and you didn't participate as a youth?

DORAH.

No, I've never. But my patriarchal blessing says I will work with the young people. So I thought, I've been given opportunities with nursery; I've been in Primary. I thought, "That is it." So this is what was interesting. We were the eyes and ears of the presidency. We were asked to visit different wards and branches. So you make an appointment with either bishop or branch president so that they can make the leaders aware that you're coming. And then you attend the classes. You just observe. And after the classes, you meet with the leaders to ask them their concerns, their struggles. And then after, you just email the presidency, just to inform them about what they said.

So what we were looking at—we looked at "How is Mutual going? Camp, are you able to have camps and all that?" I didn't stay long on the Young Women board. I was called in January, and by April, I was released the following year. The highlight of my interaction with the board is when I met all of them. We met in October 2014, all of us. And I don't know—I won't forget that experience. It was something—



KARLIE.

Because you were all around the world. So to come together, it was so special to meet in person.

DORAH.

Yeah, it's something that I will never forget in my life.

KARLIE.

Thank you so much for sharing. And it's so great to hear that those perspectives from around the world were being shared so that in Salt Lake City, leaders could better understand the experience of young women worldwide.

SHALYN.

And Thembi, you've shared that this was a special time because your mom got to experience the Young Women's program for the first time as an adult convert, and Young Women's was so formative for you as a teenager. Can you share more about this experience?

THEMBI.

I think this is the one calling where I was so excited because of how much Young Women meant to me, and the women that had made such a big impression on my life all came from Church, and specifically in Young Women. When she got called, she mentioned she was on the committee for Personal Progress as well. And so I was busy with my Personal Progress. I think I might have been completing it by the time she was called, and my sister was just starting. So it was like two generations of people trying to figure this out, and I loved it so much. And my mom had questions that I hadn't thought of before, and we were able to sit down together and learn together. I felt like a professor in Personal Progress because I got the chance to teach my mom.

KARLIE.

You were the expert.

THEMBI.



Yeah, we got to speak and talk and understand Personal Progress. And it meant so much more to me at that point, because my mom was always good at, “Hey, Thembi, have you done your Personal Progress?” She always wanted to know if I was on track. But this time, it was more of, “”kay, we need to do this together. Let’s learn.”

And I loved it. And so my sister also got into it at that point, and she was learning. I think she just was—that was her Beehive year. And my mom got to learn more about Beehives and Laurels and Mia Maids and so forth, and we had a good time learning.

And the reason why Young Women was so close to my heart is I had the best leaders. And I remember just getting the opportunity to do so many things and learn from them and being able to share that with my mom and her seeing the example that they were to me. And knowing that she was going out there meeting new Young Women leaders and so forth, I feel like she had a good blueprint to work from based on my experience in Young Women. And we would talk about this regularly before her meetings. And I really enjoyed that calling. I must have been leaving Young Women, though, but my heart grew 10 times because of that experience.

SHALYN.

It’s so neat, Dorah, to hear your experiences and then to hear Thembi’s perspective on how it impacted her life. I just think this is such a neat way to experience this interview. So thank you, both, for sharing.

KARLIE.

And Thembi, you shared when we talked before, too, that as your mom would go and visit these other wards, it was your responsibility to take your sister to church. And she was just kind of like, “Okay, you two, take care of yourselves. And I’m gone. I’ve got to watch over these other young women.”

THEMBI.

Oh yeah, my sister loved that. She would be so excited the weekends that my parents would travel together. I know that they had to get special permission to travel together and go to the different wards. But I remember my sister would wake up, and if they were gone before we needed to get to church, she was like, “Is it just the two of us?” We would go, and it was



very simple times. I feel like during our lifetime as siblings, it was kind of like it was all of us, and then we started to dwindle down. And in that year, it was like just me and Nyikiwe left. So it was a lot of fun. And you know, we knew what they were doing was so important, and so we were able to go to church and just be ourselves and enjoy it.

SHALYN.

That's so neat. Dorah, you and your husband served as mission leaders over the Zimbabwe Harare Mission. And you shared with us that you felt you received a divine gift to love the hundreds of missionaries who served in your mission. Can you share with us about that experience?

DORAH.

You know, President Monson said, "Whom he calls, he qualifies." When we were called, I was like, "I do know what a mission is all about. My son served a mission." But I didn't have a clue. One thing that helped me also is that I was able to be friends with my son's mission president and wife. And one day she said to me—she was referring to my son—"You know, we tell them Mkhabela is someone who what you see outside, you see inside."

SHALYN.

That's probably the greatest compliment anybody could ever receive, especially about their son.

DORAH.

Yes. So when I went on a mission. I think I received divine help because I've made covenants in the temple. I have covenanted. I am on the covenant path. I'm entitled to divine help if I am a covenant committed person. So it was natural for me, really, to love those children. We decided with my husband that we were going to meet them when they arrived. So I will say maybe 98 percent of our missionaries we were able to meet at the airport and able to welcome them.

One sister wrote a letter to me when we were coming back home that, "It meant a lot when you hugged me at the airport. I felt like I'm at home." I treated them like I would treat my children. The reason I did that is that they were coming from their own homes. Their mothers



trusted me with their children, and I needed to be honest with them, to love them unconditionally, to serve them to the best of my ability. At the end of our mission, I said, “This is not possible. For three years, I think I received divine help. It’s not possible that you can love so many missionaries.” But it was easy for me. I think also the missionaries prayed, their parents prayed, we prayed to love one another, and it happened. And because we were engaged in God’s work, where love is the priority, it happened.

So I just want to share another letter that I received from a sister. She said, “You know, Sister Mkhabela, I like your loving fire.” It is necessary for missionaries. And really, it’s beautiful. It’s beautiful to love and not to hold yourself, because love is in two ways. You’re tender and sometimes you need to be tough to love a person. And that is what I did. You can ask all of them; they will tell you.

KARLIE.

Thembi’s laughing.

DORAH.

Yes, so one incident that I think of, there was an accident with one of our sisters. She fell on top—I don’t know what happened. A gas bottle fell—how, I don’t know how. And she fell on top of it, and she was cooking rice. And the zone leaders called me. It’s 80 kilometers from the mission home. And I said to them, “Okay, take her to hospital.” And they updated me in the morning. First things first, I called them. They said, “Oh, we left her there.” And I said, “What kind of a hospital?” And they explained, and I said, “Okay, take her out.” I don’t know why I said that. I just said, “Take her out. I’m coming just now.” And I went there, and I saw her. She was not very critical. But it’s very primitive, you know. I had to look for a better place to place that sister, found a good place for her, and then I left her there. And my driving from Harare to Bindura, it was like I’m driving to go and see how Thembi was hurt or Nyikiwe or my son, Jackson. I just felt so bad.

I felt I was driving like a mom to go and help her, yes. So when you are a covenant-keeping person, divine help will be bestowed upon you immensely. You will be surprised at the end of the day how you did it. But I know that Heavenly Father is able to carry you.

KARLIE.



Thank you so much for sharing your testimony of that. And it is amazing. I love hearing these stories and the examples of, you know, you were in place of their parents caring for them and showing them love. Thembi, maybe you could share with us what it was like to see your parents serve and lead with so much love for these missionaries as if they were their own children and some of that tough love. I know we've laughed about that.

THEMBI.

Oh, yeah. I remember when they got the call. I also didn't understand much about missions because I did not serve. But I know my brother served, and he shared a lot about his mission. But by the point they were called, I didn't know much. But I knew that they needed to take care of a lot of missionaries, who were like technically teenagers—

KARLIE.

Yes.

THEMBI.

—into, you know, early adulthood. And I remember just thinking, “Oh, I hope they understand my mom.” She's direct, and she is the definition of tough love for me. And it's the best kind of love, to be honest. I think all of us, sometimes we are the way we are because of that. And so I was very scared for the missionaries. I had internal fear that it would take them a long time to understand that. And so I went I think the year they got there about six months into the mission.

And I got there, and they picked me up from the airport. And I think immediately there was some kind of a fireside. And I saw the missionaries just like run up to my parents just smiling and laughing and you know, “Oh, Sister Mkhabela this,” “Oh, President Mkhabela this.” And my brain didn't want to understand. I was like, “It's only been six months.” And they loved them so, so much, and I loved to see that. And I felt so much better and calm after I saw their interactions, because they just loved my parents. And I was glad that they were able to do that. And being able to be in the mission home and seeing them serve from their point of view in the time that I was there, I really felt like they were an extension of our family, because I don't think there was anything my parents wouldn't do for the missionaries. And as soon as I left, I called my mom and I said, “Look, I have all these



missionaries adding me on Facebook, and I don't want to say yes. I don't want to be friends with people I don't know."

KARLIE.

I don't know them.

THEMBI.

I only know a few of them, yeah. And they're all from the mission. She's like, "Yeah, those are your siblings. You need to—"

KARLIE.

Wow.

THEMBI.

—you need to accept that." You know, and right then, in that moment, I understood how much of a mission family they had, and I felt very much a part of that family. These were all her kids, and she was able to take care of them. And I'm so glad they enjoyed the loving fire that they received.

KARLIE.

This is so fun to hear both perspectives. Thank you so much for sharing these examples of the love that the missionaries were feeling from you. Thank you. We've kind of talked through these different experiences of service that you've had. And now, in this really unique time, you and your husband are serving as temple president and matron in the Johannesburg Temple. And I loved when we talked before, you had shared that you had been feeling nudges of wanting to serve in the temple for a long time and just timing not working out. We'd love for you to share more about that. And then we want to talk with you, too, about this power and peace that is available to women who develop a testimony of temple covenants and service.

DORAH.

Yes, so the nudges that I received personally is that I delayed to get my patriarchal blessing. I was scared. I didn't want to know what's going to



happen with me, my responsibilities. I was very scared. I was very old, in fact. But the reason I delayed is that when I got baptized into the Church, I didn't know the covenants that I was making with the Lord. And the day I knew them, I was so scared. I was like, "Will I be able to do this?" So I received nudges from my patriarchal blessing, and then I received them as I was called to serve as the Temple Preparation class teacher. I did it for three times. And during those times, I would invite the members if they want to go to the temple to receive their own endowment, I'm ready to go with them. I've been an escort for so many times because of that. Also, when we were going to the temple with my husband one day, we just said, "Oh, we need to go sit in the temple." As we were about to approach, it was President Groenewald, we talked to him about what is procedure to serve in the temple. Another call came. So my husband was called to serve as an Area Seventy.

KARLIE.

So serving as ordinance workers just didn't work out.

DORAH.

Yeah, it didn't work out. So, we continued and then we went to mission. And when I was about to finish mission, I said, "Oh, I'm going home. I'm going to fix my house, and then I'm going to serve in the temple." And then a calling came. But also, I love the temple. For me, it's the covenants that we make. Sister Linda K. Burton—she's the Jordan River Temple matron now—she said, "We must not make this a onetime event." So we prepare ourselves to get endowed. It becomes so big, and we forget that we need to go back again and again. As we go back again and again to serve in the temple, that is where the power comes. The power comes from God, and then we access this power through covenants. And then as we access them, He gives us the power that whatever happens in this mortal sojourn, we're at peace to know that we've got an eternal goal. Our goal is that of exaltation. And by the way, that power comes step by step. You know, in second Nephi it says, "I'll give you here a little and there a little." It comes that way.

And I'm reminded of hymn no. 131, where we sing, pleading with Him, "More holiness give me." He will give us more if we want to increase our capacity. But if we don't increase, He cannot give us more power, the



covenants cannot sustain us, the covenants cannot strengthen us, our faith will not be increased, and we will just be stagnant.

I'm reminded of people in Zimbabwe, because they will plan every year when they are going to attend. There's a family that I know; every year, they will come to South Africa to attend. I'm reminded of this family; they used to take their kids when they were 10 to 12. Their gift is to come to South Africa, not flying—by road. It's far. And I know that they receive divine help from Heavenly Father to be able to come. Those who are coming from far, He is able to give them more in their pockets to come and enjoy the tranquility and the peace in the temple.

KARLIE.

It's so great to hear your perspective of your love and appreciation for the temple and those whose access to the temple is more limited, like you said, this special trip for them to look forward to every year but also to sacrifice for. And I think you've shared some really practical guidance of the more that we invest in and prepare for temple worship, the more that we're in the temple, the more it can grow and become more for us and like you said, give us more peace and power and strength. And that's been inspiring to me. Thank you.

SHALYN.

Dorah, I'm having a hard time wrapping my mind around all of the service that you've been able to do. It's been amazing hearing about your experiences as leading a mission, serving on the general Young Women board, and then also being a temple matron. It's incredible.

And Thembi, we would love to hear this too. Like you shared, your parents simple service has brought some really tender blessings to your life, including opportunities for you to serve with them and for your parents to participate in your sealing to your husband, which just sounds so special. Will you share more about these experiences?

THEMBI.

Yes. So because of the example of my parents, I have always been very interested in the temple, and I've always wanted to know what was going on. And I had very wonderful Young Women leaders who would



take us for baptisms on the weekend. Sister Squires, she used to take us every Saturday. And so I really loved the temple. And the way in which the temple is set up, you really only just go to the baptistry. And I knew there was more, because I was like, “What are my parents doing every week that they go there?”

So I really wanted to go to the temple. And so I went to my bishop, and I said, “I want to go to the temple, and I would like to receive my endowments.” And this is while my parents were on their mission. And he looked at me, and he said, “Yeah, you’re ready. You should go to class.” And so, I went and I did a class, and I never went to the temple because I had the strong feeling to wait for my parents to come back. And so I did, and I waited. And then I waited too long, because I needed to do Temple Prep again. And so mom is like, “Oh, I can do that. We can do Temple Prep,” because she’s done it several times. And so I was happy about that. And so the day we decided to start, I went to my mom and I said, “Okay, let’s start Temple Prep.” And she said, “Thembi, I’m not ready.” And so, she was scared of teaching me. And so she said, “I’m not ready.”

KARLIE.

I just don’t believe that. I just don’t believe it.

THEMBI.

I know, right? And so, you know, closer to the time, I was like, “Let me ask her again.” And she was like, “Okay, you’re going to have to study and learn for yourself.” And so, I was like, “This is strange; my mom’s being weird.” And we went to the temple. My mom was able to escort me, and it was the most amazing thing I’ve ever done, and because I was so mentally prepared—it took me two years. When I got back from the temple, I just felt so special and so happy. A few weeks after that, I got engaged to my husband. And I got back home, and my dad randomly asks me if he’d like to seal myself and Andrew. And I was like, “Yeah. I mean, I’d love that. I don’t know if you can.” And the two of them knew that they were going to be temple president and matron, but they didn’t tell us. And so they’d been dropping hints. And so during that time, my mom was a little bit stressed because she had found out about her calling. And I think the weight of it—

KARLIE.

Super secretive.



THEMBI.

Yeah, and the weight of it was a bit much, but she couldn't tell me at the time. And so I look back, and I was like, "Oh, she was just a little stressed." And so a few weeks after that, we found out that they were going to go and serve. And I had already had a schedule to go to the temple Thursdays and I think on Tuesdays as well. I would go with a friend, and then I'd go again. And so I'd attend the temple twice a week every week. And I mostly did it because I was in a long-distance relationship and I needed motivation to get married, so I wanted to go to the temple. And so one of the days was sealings and the other day was endowments. And so I would do that every single week—and also just because I was heavily reliant on the government to give me a visa to be able to get married. So I was very stressed about it. So I went to the temple to get rid of that stress, and it really helped. But I got to see them all the time. I felt like a VIP at that point because I would always see them whenever I wanted to. And I loved that calling, and I think it's because of how much I love the temple, but I think I got that just from their example. And that example really helped and shaped the relationship I had with the temple, and so I loved it.

And when we finally got to get married—best day ever! Like I don't know how else to explain it. But it was the best because my mom was there, and I'm sure she'd done this several times at that point. And it was the most calming thing. And having my dad there as well being our sealer was just a gift. And we always talk about God's timing in our family and how we could think of many things that we would have wanted to do, but the way in which God plans our lives and how we've been able to experience that by being covenant-keeping people, being able to attend church, and really be present and be the kind of people who are constantly prepared to receive revelation and do as the Lord says. I think we were able to experience the things that we have because of that. And so I truly do love the temple. But I always say this is my favorite calling they've had I think because it's so close to my heart and having shared those experiences. I'm truly grateful.

DORAH.

Can I add something?

KARLIE.

Yes, please.



DORAH.

So when Thembi went to the temple, it's different from my experience. I went once, and I was very busy. I couldn't go back to the temple. And I had fear to go back to the temple. And when I got an opportunity to be a teacher, I told members of my class that, "Once you go first day, you must go the following week if it's possible. It's very critical. You need to go back so that you can be able to get used to it." But what I have learned from my daughter is that she said to me, "Oh, Mom, I go there twice." I'm like, "Why?" But I realized when she was sealed, she was the most comfortable bride. She understood what the sealing is all about. And I think it's very critical that it's better to go there again and again in order to understand. And when you understand, you appreciate more.

KARLIE.

That's such great advice. And I really appreciated you sharing your personal experience, of you hadn't been able to go back and you did feel a little bit of that fear and maybe some anxiety about returning. And it's okay to acknowledge that sometimes that's people's experience but having that encouragement that you shared to go again. And you've shared with us, too, that studying the scriptures can help us better understand the temple and have a better experience. I think all of that is such great counsel for women attending the temple for the first time or continuing their worship in the temple.

SHALYN.

Absolutely. Thembi, you shared with us that you were surrounded by strong women— young and old, some married and some single—in your Church community growing up in South Africa. And it's very obvious that your mom was one of these very strong, incredible women. But Thembi, we'd love for you to tell us more about the strength of women in South Africa and examples of how they support and care for each other.

THEMBI.

I had wonderful leaders who were either single or they were attending church on their own with just their children. And a lot of them showed so much strength and how they were able to support me as well as their own children and all the Primary kids and the young women. I felt as if their conversion to the gospel was so strong because they didn't have the same unit that I



grew up in. You know, I had my mom and my dad going to church. I went with my siblings. But they had to do this on their own the majority of the time.

Probably one of the sisters who was very close to my heart, who she would make sure she got us to church no matter what. For anything, she was there. So Sandra used to make sure she transported everybody to church. And I shared a story of it was three cousins and, you know, three other friends that they attended church with, and these were girls and they came to church and they loved it because we had really wonderful leaders and wonderful young women. And they joined the Church. And they lived—I don't know how to explain it—but just not like very close to Sandra. But she would make sure every single Sunday she'd go pick them up and bring them to church because we loved them, and we wanted them to be a part of Young Women. And nobody asked her to do that; she would just offer.

And we had sisters who would always come to church with their kids. It would be awkward not to see them on a Sunday. And they would be participating; they would share their testimonies. And these are women that now that I was attending the temple, I attended with them, and I got to see them at the temple. It's so different to see that, because you see people who are fully aware of the covenants that they're making and will make every sacrifice possible to be at church and to be able to enjoy church the way that they do. So being in Utah, you see full family units every single time, and to see their dedication to the Church and how much they love it and being able to have seen that example just from women in South Africa, it's been empowering to know how powerful the gospel is, no matter where it is.

KARLIE.

Thank you so much for sharing. And I was excited about this question because this is a podcast for and about women, and I just love hearing of the strength of our sisters, right? We are all women in the gospel; we're all Relief Society sisters. And seeing how those women are fulfilling their commitments and their dedication to the gospel in South Africa. So we'd love, too, to have Dorah, if there's anything more that you would add about being a part of that community of sisters in the Relief Society in South Africa.

DORAH.

Yes, yes, yes, yes. It's beautiful; we are a family. I have had several surgeries during my lifetime in the Church that the sisters were there to



take care of me—be it meals, be it transport. I have been there to help also—be it meals, be it transport. It's amazing. But I also want to share my experience in Zimbabwe. So one day, I called the sisters and I said, "I want to proselyte with you." And they said, "Okay, there's a young woman, but she has a baby." So we went; they lived in a one-room house." So the mother was a domestic worker. When we entered there, that woman was bedridden. Flies were all over her body. And they started to read scriptures. And then when we left, I immediately called the Relief Society president. I said, "There's a need."

You know, guess what? The following day, that woman was taken to hospital. Unfortunately, she passed on. But the urgency that Relief Society president portrayed. I knew that in the Church, we grow because there are imperatives that are driving us to make a difference in the Lord's kingdom.

SHALYN.

Well, thank you so much. I think it's so inspiring to just hear about different groups of Relief Society sisters around the world. And while we have differences, there's so much that we have in common, and it's just devotion to Jesus Christ and our love for each other and our desire to serve and just see everybody succeed and be happy. And I appreciate both of the perspectives that you've shared. Thank you so much for being on the podcast with us today, Dorah and Thembi.

KARLIE.

We need to have more mom/daughter duos. This is really fun. So thank you so much.

DORAH.

You're welcome.

KARLIE.

And to our listeners, thank you for tuning in to this episode of the Latter-day Saint Women podcast. As a reminder, we have new episodes released every week, and we hope you'll continue to tune in and share the episodes with your friends and family members. We've been so grateful to hear from so many listeners via email and on Apple Podcasts reviews, and we hope you'll continue to share your thoughts and feedback. We love hearing from



you. Feel free to contact us at podcast@ChurchofJesusChrist.org with any suggestions for topics or guests.

SHALYN.

We also want to make sure our listeners are aware that the podcast is available just about anywhere you listen to podcasts. So keep that in mind as you tune in, subscribe, and please continue to share these voices and stories of women of faith with your friends and family. We'd love to thank our wonderful editor, Curt Dahl, and our producer, Matthew Mangum, and the many others who support this podcast. Until next week, I'm Shalyn Back.

KARLIE.

And I'm Karlie Guymon. Thanks for listening.

