

Emulating Eliza

By Katherine Nelson



When my husband and I were newly married, we moved into a ward whose age range was very different from that of the young adult wards I was used to. Each week it was with trepidation that I entered the Relief Society room. Many of the older ladies had known each other for years, and the other women either held newborns in their arms or had children and teens waiting for them after the meeting.

A few weeks after we'd moved in, my visiting teachers shared a sweet message with me that included a quote from Eliza R. Snow. Hearing Eliza's name reminded me of my middle name, Snow, and piqued my curiosity about this ancestor of mine.

That evening, I opened *Daughters in My Kingdom*, and for many nights following I studied as much as I could about Eliza. I learned about the beautiful poetry she wrote and about the careful minutes she took at early Relief Society meetings. I discovered her teachings as the second Relief Society general president, including the following: "Has not God endowed you with the gift of speech? . . . If you are endowed with the Spirit of God, no matter how simple your thoughts may be, they will be edifying to those who hear you."¹ The more I learned about this valiant woman, the more I felt her love for

Relief Society and her conviction of its divine purpose.

As I studied, I considered my own shy behavior in Relief Society: how during lessons I had withheld thoughts that might have edified others, or how I had shied away from initiating a conversation with another sister who, like me, sat by herself in the corner. I thought about my flagging efforts as a visiting teacher and how my fears were inhibiting me from developing more fulfilling relationships with my sisters in Christ.

Overcoming my fear of speaking up and becoming more involved in Relief Society didn't happen right away. But I made little goals for each Sunday—beginning with walking straight up to the sister I was supposed to visit teach and asking when I could sit down with her again to get to know her better.

Learning more about Eliza's bold expressions of faith taught me that I could develop the kind of confident communication she both described and exemplified, and discovering her deep appreciation for Relief Society helped me learn to love it too. At a time when I felt out of place, studying more about my ancestor Eliza's Christlike life taught me that often the solution to discomfort and loneliness is to speak up and reach out. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Eliza R. Snow, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 49.

