

# Gratitude: A Path to Happiness

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**T**his afternoon I am honored to represent those Relief Society leaders who, here in this very Tabernacle, shared the doctrines of the kingdom, emphasized the significance of women's roles in the home and family, called each other to charitable service, and reminded their sisters of the joy that comes from righteous living.

From this pulpit in 1870, Eliza R. Snow asked thousands of women a question that I'd like to repeat today: "Do you know of any place on the face of the earth, where [a] woman has more liberty, and where she enjoys such high and glorious privileges as she does here, as a Latter-day

Saint?"<sup>1</sup> I bear witness that the women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do enjoy grand and glorious privileges.

## **Blessing Basket**

Let me share a sweet story with you. A family was going through a difficult time. It was hard for them not to focus on their challenges. The mother wrote: "Our world had completely crumpled, so we turned to Heavenly Father for guidance. Almost immediately we realized that we were surrounded by goodness and were being cheered on from every side. We began as a family to express our gratitude to each other as well as to the Lord daily. A close friend pointed out to me that our family's 'blessing basket' was overflowing. From that conversation came a sort of game, which my children and I grew to love. Before family prayer each night we would talk about how our day had gone and then share with each other all of the many blessings that had been added to our 'blessing basket.' The more we expressed gratitude, the more there was to be grateful for. We felt the love of the Lord in a significant way as opportunities for growth presented themselves."<sup>2</sup>

What would a "blessing basket" add to your family?

### A Spirit-Filled Principle

Gratitude requires awareness and effort, not only to feel it but to express it. Frequently we are oblivious to the Lord's hand. We murmur, complain, resist, criticize; so often we are not grateful. In the Book of Mormon, we learn that those who murmur do not know "the dealings of that God who . . . created them."<sup>3</sup> The Lord counsels us not to murmur because it is then difficult for the Spirit to work with us.

Gratitude is a Spirit-filled principle. It opens our minds to a universe permeated with the richness of a living God. Through it, we become spiritually aware of the wonder of the smallest things, which gladden our hearts with their messages of God's love. This grateful awareness heightens our sensitivity to divine direction. When we communicate gratitude, we can be filled with the Spirit and connected to those around us and the Lord.

Gratitude inspires happiness and carries divine influence. "Live in thanksgiving daily," said Amulek, "for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you."<sup>4</sup>

Mercies and blessings come in different forms—sometimes as hard things. Yet the Lord said, "Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in *all* things."<sup>5</sup> *All things* means just that: good things, difficult things—not just some things. He has commanded us to be grateful because He knows being grateful will make us happy. This is another evidence of His love.

How do you feel when someone expresses gratitude to you? One Sunday I sat next to a sister in Relief Society and got to know her a little better. A few days later I received an e-mail: "Thank you for sitting next to my daughter in Relief Society. You put your arm around her. You will never know how much that meant to her and to me."<sup>6</sup> This mother's words surprised me and brought me happiness.

How do you feel when you express gratitude to another? I'd like to express



gratitude to someone who cares about my grandchildren. A few months ago, while visiting in Texas, I asked six-year-old Thomas to tell me about his bishop. He said, "Oh, Grandmother, you will know him. He wears a dark suit, a white shirt like Papa, and he has shiny shoes and a red tie. He wears glasses and always has a smile." I recognized Thomas's bishop as soon as I saw him. My heart was filled with gratitude for him. Thank you, Bishop Goodman, and thank you, all you wonderful bishops.

### An Expression of Faith

Luke chapter 17 records the experience of the Savior when He healed 10 lepers. As you recall, only one of the cleansed lepers returned to express his appreciation. Isn't it interesting that the Lord did not say, "Your *gratitude* has made you whole"? Instead, He said, "Thy *faith* hath made thee whole."<sup>7</sup>

The leper's expression of gratitude was recognized by the Savior as an expression of his faith. As we pray and

express gratitude to a loving but unseen Heavenly Father, we are also expressing our faith in Him. Gratitude is our sweet acknowledgment of the Lord's hand in our lives; it is an expression of our faith.

### Gratitude in Tribulations: Hidden Blessings

In 1832 the Lord saw the need to prepare the Church for coming tribulations. Tribulations are frightening. And yet the Lord said: "Be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours.

"And he who receiveth *all* things with thankfulness shall be made glorious."<sup>8</sup>

The kind of gratitude that receives even tribulations with thanksgiving requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit, humility to accept that which we cannot change, willingness to turn everything over to the Lord—even when we do not understand, thankfulness for hidden opportunities yet

to be revealed. Then comes a sense of peace.

When was the last time you thanked the Lord for a trial or tribulation? Adversity compels us to go to our knees; does gratitude for adversity do that as well?

President David O. McKay observed, “We find in the bitter chill of adversity the real test of our gratitude . . . , which . . . goes beneath the surface of life, whether sad or joyous.”<sup>9</sup>

### Conclusion

To my remarkable, faithful sisters of the Church, I thank you for the ways you extend the Lord’s love through your service: your care for families at the death of a loved one, your watch-care as you visit teach, your willingness to build testimonies in children as you serve in Primary, your time preparing young women for womanhood. Thank you for your devotion. I have experienced the love of the Lord through your faithfulness. I have been blessed to serve among you; my heart is brimming over with gratitude and love for each of you. I have deep gratitude for the priesthood brethren with whom I’ve served.

My most profound gratitude is for my Savior—an obedient Son, who did all that His Father asked and atoned for every one of us. As I remember Him and acknowledge His goodness, I desire to be like Him. May we be blessed to feel of His love in our lives daily. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”<sup>10</sup> In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. In Jill C. Mulvay, “Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, winter 1976, 251.
2. Personal correspondence.
3. 1 Nephi 2:12.
4. Alma 34:38.
5. D&C 59:7; emphasis added.
6. Personal correspondence.
7. Luke 17:19; emphasis added.
8. D&C 78:18–19; emphasis added.
9. *Pathways to Happiness*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay (1957), 318.
10. 2 Corinthians 9:15.