

Eliza Spoke with Authority

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We, like Eliza R. Snow, can face our fears and speak with courage.

On April 18, 1884, an aging woman with a careworn face stood to speak to Relief Society sisters in Utah. This was Relief Society General President Eliza R. Snow, and a newspaper would report that, although 80 years old, she “spoke with great power and earnestness, and her voice seemed strong and filled the large building.”¹

When Eliza was baptized, she promised God that she would “ever praise His name in the congregation of the saints.”² She stayed true to that promise, giving more than a thousand sermons in her lifetime. Yet those who had the privilege of hearing her might be surprised to learn that public speaking made her very anxious. Even while teaching school in Nauvoo and recording the minutes of the Relief Society meetings there, she hesitated to speak up.

An invitation to face her fears came in 1868, when President Brigham Young asked Eliza to help



organize Relief Societies throughout Utah. “I want you to instruct the sisters,” he said. The idea was so frightening that Eliza described her heart skipping a beat.³ But she found the courage to do her best, and over time she learned that accepting challenging callings filled her with strength beyond her own.

To one group, Eliza explained that the President of the Church had called her to go on a mission, and she testified that it is easiest “to do at [once] what is required of us.”⁴ To another group, Eliza confessed that she didn’t feel competent to speak. “But with your faith and prayers and the spirit of the Lord, I may be able to say something that will comfort and bless you.”⁵ She learned through experience to seek the Spirit to enable her to speak with power.

Eliza encouraged women to find the courage to stand and share their testimonies: “By speaking your best thoughts they will be increased and strengthened.”⁶ Not only did she learn to speak with authority herself, but she taught others to face their fears and open their mouths. ■

NOTES

1. “Editorial Notes,” *Woman’s Exponent*, vol. 12, no. 23 (May 1, 1884), 180.
2. Minutes of the Senior and Junior Co-operative Retrenchment Association, June 22, 1872, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
3. See Eliza R. Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” 35.
4. American Fork Ward Relief Society minutes and records, Oct. 29, 1868, Church History Library.
5. Lehi Ward Relief Society minutes and records, Oct. 27, 1868, Church History Library.
6. Alpine Ward Relief Society minutes and records, Oct. 29, 1868, Church History Library.

Learn more about Sister Snow in this issue in the Gospel Library app and at iahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.