



SISTERS IN THE COVENANT

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we all have sisters who love and support us—no matter our family situation.

By Emmaline R. Wilson

My first Sunday as a student in Paris, France, I marveled at the diversity of my new ward. Conducting Relief Society was a lovely woman from Eastern Europe. Some sisters from West Africa graciously lent me their hymnbook. An Asian woman who had painstakingly translated her lesson into French led one of the most heartfelt lessons I had ever heard. Although I was a young American living 5,000 miles (8,045 km) from my hometown, I felt

at home among the good women of the Church. We came from France, Cambodia, Ivory Coast, Ukraine, and the United States—but differences in age and culture didn't matter. A spirit of sisterhood united us.

During my early college years, I realized for the first time what an incredible network of sisters I had belonged to my entire life. Growing up without biological sisters, I sometimes felt unable to form a clear idea of what sisterhood entailed. While I am so grateful for my wonderful parents and brothers, I longed for sisters with whom to share, laugh, and experience life. Instead, I have learned to rely on the sisters I've found within the "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). Many experiences have taught me that I can rely on these faithful women—because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I *do* have sisters!

The world teaches us that differences in family, generation, culture, or personality push us apart. In reality,

sisters are united through love, service, and our divine heritage as children of Heavenly Father. This unity helps us fulfill our baptismal covenants. We have promised to "come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

"Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in" (Mosiah 18:8–9).

Come into the Fold of God

Sisters help one another keep those baptismal covenants in many ways. Ting Chang of Taiwan "[came] into the fold of God" while in middle school. Because her family was in a difficult financial situation, Ting would forgo lunch to save on family expenses. Jina, a classmate, noticed.



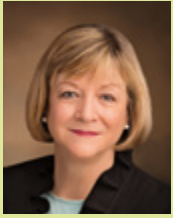
Jina's mom began to prepare extra food every day for lunch to share with Ting. Soon Jina invited her friend to attend church with her. Jina's mom had recently joined the Church, and Jina was taking lessons with the missionaries. For Ting, the example of charity these women presented was powerful, and she also began meeting with the missionaries.

Together, Ting and Jina read scriptures and kept a journal of their sacred experiences. Their bonds of sisterhood grew when both young women were baptized on the same day. Today, both are serving full-time missions to spread the joy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jina, her mother, and Ting have become sisters through living the Lord's standards and by bearing His name.

Bear One Another's Burdens

Loving service is another hallmark of true sisterhood. Compassionate service and visiting teaching are the Church's vehicles for that service. Jacqueline Soares Ribeiro Lima of Brazil related how two visiting teachers blessed her life and family after she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and felt unable to attend





“We rejoice in our many different roles as women in the Church. Though in many ways

we are different and unique, we also acknowledge that we are all daughters of the same Heavenly Father, which makes us sisters. We are unified in building the kingdom of God and in the covenants which we have made.”

Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women General President, “Sisterhood: Oh, How We Need Each Other,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 119.



church regularly: “My husband, Vladimir, did everything he could to help me through the worst phase of the illness. . . . He faced the worst moments alone—until two wonderful women were called as my visiting teachers.”

Those two women, Rita and Fátima, demonstrated their love by learning more about the disorder and supporting Jacqueline’s family. She constantly felt their true interest in her. Their service included hosting a small party for Jacqueline and sewing a dress for her daughter. Ultimately, the heartfelt concern of Rita and Fátima helped Jacqueline spiritually, and she resumed regular church attendance, buoyed by their strength.

Whether our sisters’ burdens are physical, emotional, or spiritual, it is marvelous when we reach out in love to the tired young mother, the shy new Beehive, the lonely elderly woman, the overtaxed Relief Society president. Women of the covenant “delight in service and good works”¹ and thus seek out and lift their sisters who are worn or weary.

Mourn with Those Who Mourn

Women of faith follow the example of the Savior when they reach out in tenderness. There is perhaps no better example in the scriptures of selfless love than Naomi of Bethlehem and her daughter-in-law Ruth of Moab. Ruth chose to serve her mother-in-law

after Naomi’s husband and sons had died. In sorrow, Naomi decided to return to her own country. Although these women came from different cultural and religious backgrounds, they became friends as they supported each other in righteous living and worked through trials together.

Ruth’s example and service were so great that Naomi’s lamentation turned to joy at her good fortune in this wonderful daughter-in-law and sister in the gospel. Their bond was so strong that other women, seeing their mutual love, remarked, “Blessed be the Lord, which hath . . . [given thee] thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons” (Ruth 4:14–15).

Comfort Those Who Stand in Need of Comfort

A note from a sister in her ward comforted Raihau Gariki of Tahiti, who was called as a Relief Society teacher just one month after turning 18. She was nervous to teach “mothers and grandmothers, women who already knew so much, had faced many trials, and experienced a lot of things.” After her first lesson, she received “a note full of love” from a woman in the class. This note bolstered her confidence—she pasted it in her journal to help her through hard times.

Sisters in the gospel comfort and sustain one another through times of



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affliction. J. Scott Featherstone, a stake president in Utah, remembers going with his wife to visit a woman in their stake whose husband had just passed away. “My wife just held her, crying with her and comforting her until she felt loved.” Sometimes sisterhood is just that simple.

Stand as Witnesses of God

There is great power when women of all ages unite to “stand for truth and righteousness.”² Sisterhood in the gospel of Jesus Christ can strengthen us, regardless of the situations we face in an increasingly wicked world. Even the very young can stand as witnesses: Jessica Vosaniyaqona of California, USA, shared how the six-year-old girls in her Primary class reminded her and testified to her of the importance of families.

Elderly sisters are important examples too. Kimm Frost from Utah recalls many women who have influenced her to stay strong in the gospel, including Ursula Squires. Kimm noted: “Sister Squires became my visiting teaching companion when she was well into her 90s. She didn’t see or hear well, but she was totally dedicated to the gospel. She never missed church and did her visiting teaching faithfully. . . . She was an inspiration to me.” Whether through example or by sharing testimony, sisters become united disciples of the Master.

Sisters in the Church of God

I have truly found sisters as I have watched women “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9). I had the opportunity to serve a full-time mission. When my call came to the Utah Salt Lake City Temple Square Mission—the only all-female mission in the Church—I admit to feeling nervous about being surrounded by so many women. I needn’t have worried. My testimony of sisterhood grew exponentially as I interacted with countless women who each testified of the Savior in their everyday actions.

My first holidays in the mission field, my mission president gathered all our mission together to watch an uplifting movie. At one point, the film depicted two sisters helping each other overcome daunting circumstances. I felt touched by their unity. As I watched the film and looked around at all the radiant sister missionaries, the Spirit testified strongly to me that sisterhood is an eternal bond prescribed by our Heavenly Father, and I was included. What a wonderful truth: we are never alone, for the Lord has given us all sisters. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA

NOTES

1. “The Relief Society Declaration,” *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women* (2000), xi.
2. *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2009), 2.