

## Episode 3

### Stories from General Relief Society Meetings

#### ENDURING TRIALS

[BEGIN MUSIC]

**NARRATOR:** Welcome to this episode of *Stories from General Relief Society Meetings*. We all have trials. Part of our life here on earth is to experience adversity. That's not always easy, but it is part of our mortal experience. Today's episode is on enduring to the end, trials and all. In the first story, from the 1999 General Relief Society Meeting, President James E. Faust illustrates courage to keep going with a story about a young piano player.

[END MUSIC]

(President James E. Faust, General Relief Society Meeting, October 1999)

Now, some of you older sisters may ask, "Haven't I heard every Relief Society lesson? What point is there for me to go to Relief Society each week?" The answer to those questions may best be given by relating the story of a young piano student. His mother, wishing to encourage him, "bought tickets for a performance of the great Polish pianist, Paderewski. The night of the concert arrived and the mother and son found their seats near the front of the concert hall. While the mother visited with friends, the boy slipped quietly away.

"Suddenly, it was time for the performance to begin and a single spotlight cut through the darkness of the concert hall to illuminate the grand piano on stage. Only then did the audience notice the little boy on the bench, innocently picking out 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.'

"His mother gasped, but before she could move, Paderewski appeared on stage and quickly moved to the keyboard. He whispered to the boy, 'Don't quit. Keep playing.' And then, leaning over, the master reached down with his left hand and began filling in the bass part. Soon his right arm reached around the other side, encircling the child, to add a running obbligato. Together, the old master and the young novice held the crowd mesmerized.

"In our lives, unpolished though we may be, it is the Master who surrounds us and whispers in our ear, time and time again, 'Don't quit. Keep playing.' And as we do, He augments and supplements until a work of amazing beauty is created. He is right there with all of us, telling us over and over, 'Keep playing.'"

[BEGIN MUSIC]

**NARRATOR:** In Alma 36 in the Book of Mormon the prophet Alma tells his son Helaman: "I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day". It is much easier to make it through life when we allow

**God to help. In an address from the 2001 General Relief Society Meeting, Sister Virginia U. Jensen tells about a woman who gained support in her trials by relying on the Savior.**

**[END MUSIC]**

(Sister Virginia U. Jensen, General Relief Society Meeting, October 2001)

Once while I was traveling in an area plagued by violence and social unrest, a sensitive priesthood leader perceived my fear and shared with me a few words that brought comfort.

When he was a boy, his mother, finding herself suddenly single and destitute, drew strength from the following words she read in an old book:

"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.'

"And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way" (Minnie Louise Haskins, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed., ed. Angela Partington [1996], 328).

My friend's mother rebuilt her life and created a firm foundation by following this admonition. I too was sustained in my time of concern by pressing forward into the unknown, armed with the knowledge that the Lord's companionship was better than any mortal protection.

To stand firm we must know in the core of our souls that the Lord will be our support if we stand firmly planted on the rock of our Redeemer.

**[BEGIN MUSIC]**

**NARRATOR: Trials are an essential part of Heavenly Father's plan. Through adversity we gain spiritual growth and strength. From the 2006 General Relief Society Meeting, President Hinckley now reads a letter from a woman who stayed strong in her beliefs as she endured trials.**

**[END MUSIC]**

(President Gordon B. Hinckley, General Relief Society Meeting, October 2006)

Last week I received a letter from a single mother, a part of which I wish to read to you. She says as follows:

"It has been 10 years since you mentioned our family in October conference in 1996. . . . The words of counsel and encouragement that you gave to me and other single sisters have been a pattern used in my daily life. The phrase that has become my motto and watchword [is] 'Do the very best you can,' and that is indeed what my sons and I are trying to do.

"All four of my sons graduated from high school and seminary. Two of them served full-time missions. We are all working to provide for ourselves and continue to be true and faithful in the gospel. It is a great feeling to know that we have made it on our own for the past several years. . . . There is a certain feeling of accomplishment when you can once again stand on your own two feet and provide for your family's needs. . . .

"I was encouraged to go back to college. . . . It is a real challenge to work full-time and attend classes at night. It has broadened my perspective on life and helped me to be a better person. My family, ward members, and co-workers have been very supportive. I will graduate this December.

"As I pondered my patriarchal blessing and made it a matter of fasting and prayer, I was able to set some realistic goals in my life that have been used as a road map to keep me on track with the principles of the gospel. I attend my meetings, pray daily, and pay my tithing. I . . . take my calling as a visiting teacher very seriously. . . .

"The Church is true, and it is an honor and a privilege to be counted as a worthy and blessed member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are led by inspiration from a loving Heavenly Father, who knows us and wants us to progress and grow. I thank you for your kind words of encouragement 10 years ago, and for the many continuing words of inspiration that come from the Lord through His servants. I know I am a child of God and my life is blessed by my membership in His Church."

[BEGIN MUSIC]

**NARRATOR: From the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, you're listening to *Stories from General Relief Society Meetings on the Mormon Channel*. Today's episode is on enduring trials. Heavenly Father can work great miracles in our life, but we must do our part. From the 2002 General Relief Society Meeting, Sister Anne C. Pingree shares a heartwarming example of overcoming discouragement and accomplishing what seemed impossible.**

[END MUSIC]

(Sister Anne C. Pingree, General Relief Society Meeting, October 2002)

In our times, Sister Knell is a covenant woman who makes a difference. She is a widow in her 80s with a 47-year-old son, mentally and physically disabled from birth. A few years ago this dear sister set out to do what seemed impossible to everyone else—to teach her son Keith to read. Learning to read was his greatest desire, but doctors had said Keith was incapable of reading. With faith in her heart and a desire to bless her son's life, this humble widow said to her son, "I know Heavenly Father will bless you so you can read the Book of Mormon."

Sister Knell wrote the following: "It was hard work for Keith, and it wasn't easy for me, either. At first there were some bad days, because I got upset. It has been a time-consuming, word-by-word struggle. I sit by his side each morning. I point to each word with a pencil to help him stay on track. After seven long years and one month, Keith finally finished reading the Book of Mormon." His mother said, "Hearing him read a verse without help is a thrill I just cannot put into words." She testifies, "I know miracles do happen when we put our trust in the Lord."

[BEGIN MUSIC]

**NARRATOR: Keith learned that others, especially family members, can help us through our trials. Keith and his mother both learned from this experience. Next from an address give in the 2000 General Relief Society Meeting, Sister Sheri Dew shares a personal experience of how friends and family members supported each other during times of trial and tragedy.**

[END MUSIC]

(Sister Sheri L. Dew, General Relief Society Meeting, October 2000)

I have 17 nieces and nephews, who are a pure delight. We have hiked and biked and fasted and prayed together. And recently we have cried together. A few weeks ago we suffered a crushing loss when an accident took the lives of two of my sister's children--Amanda, who was 11, and Tanner, who was 15. Because we have lived together in love, we have truly wept for the loss of them that died (see D&C 42:45).

Our friends in our hometown wept with us, most of them nonmembers, and we knew their hearts might never be more open to truth than on the day two caskets rested in our little Kansas chapel. So we dedicated the funeral entirely to testifying of Christ and the restored gospel. Afterwards many told us how moved they were by what they heard and by what they felt. Some have even asked to learn more. Now, we don't know yet if anyone affected by our children's deaths will join the Church. But this we do know--that standing up for what we believe and teaching the gospel to friends who had never before been willing to listen helped soothe our pain and bring us joy as a family.

In this world, the only true joy comes from the gospel--the joy that radiates from the Atonement and from ordinances that transcend the veil, and from the Comforter that salves our souls. Recently my 11-year-old niece Aubrey, whose father died five years ago, was asked by a nonmember friend why she wasn't sad about the deaths of her father and, recently, her cousins. Aubrey's reply was classic: "Not sad? Trust me, we are sad, but we know that we will be together again, so we don't worry as much." As a family we've no doubt cried as much, but we don't worry as we would if we hadn't felt the transcendent reach and healing power of Jesus Christ. The gospel is "beauty for ashes" (Isa. 61:3); it is "the oil of gladness" (Heb. 1:9); it is such good news!

Though our children are gone for now, we have the glorious reassurance that we haven't lost them.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

**NARRATOR: In our church, every member makes covenants with God. One is to mourn with those that mourn, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort. From an address given in the 1998 General Relief Society Meeting, Sister Sheri L. Dew shares another story of how friends came to her aid at a time of great loss.**

[END MUSIC]

(Sister Sheri L. Dew, General Relief Society Meeting, October 1998)

It has been nearly three years since I received one of those dreaded early-morning phone calls. My younger brother Steve had suffered a massive heart attack and died during the night. In an instant, and without warning, my most trusted friend was gone.

During the next few days many who loved Steve and his wife and children traveled to their home in Colorado. But it wasn't until *after* the funeral that I realized that seven dear friends of mine had made the long trip from Salt Lake City to attend the service. Not one of them had ever met my brother. They had come to support me. You can imagine my emotions as they encircled me and one of them said, "We just didn't want you to be alone today." In word and deed, they taught a divine principle. It is not good, nor is it intended, for any of us to be alone.

The pain of loneliness seems to be part of the mortal experience. But the Lord in His mercy has made it so that we need never deal with the challenges of mortality alone.

I was thinking about this recently as I sat through a meeting where the speaker seemed preoccupied with how *hard* it is to live the gospel. By the end of the meeting, I was depressed. He had made living the gospel seem like a sentence to life on the rock pile. It's not living the gospel that's hard. It's *life* that's hard. It's picking up the pieces when covenants have been compromised or values violated that's hard. The gospel is the Good News that provides us the tools to cope with the mistakes, the heartaches, the disappointments we can expect to experience here. Membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has its privileges. Here are just a few: We are led by those holding the priesthood of God, the most powerful and holy force on earth. We are members of the Relief Society, the *only* organization for women founded by a prophet of God. And tonight we will be taught by a *living* prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is the Lord's anointed in *this* day. I testify that he is a prophet in every dimension of that word and that he receives revelation to bless the lives of all who have ears to hear.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

**NARRATOR: Later in that same address, Sister Sheri Dew tells us how she gained great comfort from the scriptures. Reading the scriptures fills us with the Spirit sent by our Heavenly Father and is especially needed in times of adversity and trial.**

[END MUSIC]

(Sister Sheri L. Dew, General Relief Society Meeting, October 1998)

I remember a time when a personal disappointment had left me exquisitely lonely. One day while searching the scriptures for consolation, I had the impression that I needed to focus on one particular verse. That verse led me to hundreds of others in what became a period of intense searching. But it wasn't until three years later that another passage leaped out at me as if in neon. Only then was I given to understand what the Lord had been trying to teach me all that time about the power of the Atonement to ease our burdens. Some of the clearest promptings I have ever received have come while being immersed in the scriptures. They are a conduit for revelation. They teach us the language of the Spirit.

**[BEGIN MUSIC]**

**NARRATOR: All of us will have difficult times. Some have trials that may last a lifetime. But as we stay strong in our convictions, we can inspire future generations to endure their trials and remain strong. In the 2002 General Relief Society Meeting, Sister Kathleen H. Hughes gives such an example.**

**[END MUSIC]**

(Sister Kathleen H. Hughes, General Relief Society Meeting, October 2002)

Let me tell you about a woman I have never met but whom I love dearly because she was true to her covenants. My great-great-grandmother Charlotte Gailey Clark was one of the last 295 people to receive their covenants in the Nauvoo Temple prior to the beginning of the great exodus west. The temple had been closed since the Saints were being forced to leave, but all those who were worthy had not yet had an opportunity to receive their endowments. My great-great-grandmother and her husband would be leading their family west, and she wanted her covenants with her before she set out on that journey. I have thought about her so often these past few months. I someday want to say to her, "Grandma, thank you for keeping your covenants. I am so blessed to be your granddaughter. Your faithfulness has blessed me and my family—and will continue to bless all of us throughout all the generations." And sisters, our children and grandchildren will one day be able to say the same to us, and of us. One day they will thank us for keeping this "bag" of covenants with us and using them to bless the lives of our families.

**[BEGIN MUSIC]**

**NARRATOR: No matter what happens, we can gain comfort by living the gospel. We are assured that one day we will rest from our trials. Next President Thomas S. Monson shares a letter in the 2004 General Relief Society Meeting from a sister who knew the importance of living a gospel-centered life.**

**[END MUSIC]**

(President Thomas S. Monson, General Relief Society Meeting, October 2004)

During 1980, the sesquicentennial year of the organization of the Church, each member of the Relief Society general board was asked to write a personal letter to the sisters of the Church in the year 2030—50 years hence. The following is an excerpt from the letter written by Sister Helen Lee Goates:

"Our world of 1980 is filled with uncertainty, but I am determined to live each day with faith and not fear, to trust the Lord and to follow the counsel of our prophet today. I know that God lives, and I love Him with all my soul. I am so grateful that the gospel was restored to the earth 150 years ago and that I can enjoy the blessings of membership in this great Church. I am grateful for the priesthood of God, having felt its power throughout my life.

"I am at peace in my world and pray that you may be sustained in yours by firm testimonies and unwavering convictions of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Helen Lee Goates passed away in April of the year 2000. Shortly before her impending death from cancer, Sister Monson and I visited with her and her husband and family. She appeared calm and at peace. She told us she was prepared to go and looked forward to seeing once again her parents and other loved ones who had preceded her. In her life Sister Goates exemplified the nobility of Latter-day Saint women. In her passing she personified your theme: "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear."

**[BEGIN MUSIC]**

**NARRATOR: In the Doctrine and Covenants section 58 the Lord counseled the suffering Latter-day Saints as follows: "Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation. For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory." What a great promise to those who live the gospel of Jesus Christ and use the help available to us to endure whatever trials may come.**

**This has been an episode of *Stories from the General Relief Society Meetings* on the Mormon Channel. The topic has been enduring trials. For more information go to [radio.lds.org](http://radio.lds.org) and tell your friends about us.**

**[END MUSIC]**

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