

Episode 5

Stories from General Young Women Meetings

LOVE

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: From the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, welcome to stories from the General Young Women Meetings. These stories are compiled from various General Young Women Meetings. Today's topic is love. Sister Susan W. Tanner begins this collection with a story about her grand-daughter from the 2007 General Young Women Meeting.

[END MUSIC]

(Susan W. Tanner, April 2007, General Young Women Meeting)

Our son-in-law told his daughter, three-year-old Eliza, that for family home evening they were going to have a lesson on a very special subject. She got a big smile on her face and attempted to guess the surprise. "It must be about *me*," she said, "because I am very special!" Eliza remembers and knows who she is—a very special child of God. She has learned this from her mother, who from Eliza's earliest infancy has sung our opening hymn, "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301), as a nightly lullaby.

All over the world and in almost every language, young women ages 12 to 18 declare the same thing: "We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love Him" ("Young Women Theme," *Young Women Personal Progress* [booklet, 2001], 5). Yet as they grow up, they often grow away from the confident knowledge of three-year-old Eliza that they are very special. Youth often experience an identity crisis, wondering who they really are. The teenage years are also a time of what I describe as "identity theft," meaning that worldly ideas, philosophies, and deceits confuse us, buffet us, and seek to rob us of the knowledge of our true identity.

One very good young woman said to me, "Sometimes I am not sure who I am. I don't feel Heavenly Father's love. My life seems hard. Things are not turning out the way I wanted, hoped, and dreamed they would." What I said to her I now say to young women everywhere: I know unequivocally that you are a daughter of God. He knows you, He loves you, and He has a plan for you.

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NARRATION 2: Later, in the same talk, Sister Tanner explains God's love for young women everywhere.

[END MUSIC]

(Susan W. Tanner, April 2007, General Young Women Meeting)

I have been touched to learn of the goodness of five young LDS students from Idaho who recently drowned in a terrible accident. They were known by their peers and in their communities for living standards of righteousness and being sterling examples of virtue and wholesomeness. These youth knew they were sons and daughters of God.

I've been warmed by the example of another young woman whose parents got divorced. She did not want her younger brother and sisters to feel unloved, so she says prayers with them every night and tells them she loves them. This young woman knows she is a daughter of a Heavenly Father who loves her, and she loves Him by loving her siblings.

And I have been moved to learn about the actions of young women in a poverty-stricken and politically oppressed area of the world. Despite their own hardships, these young women met at camp and planned ways to lift others. They made hygiene kits for women in need. They did additional service in the community, in hospitals, and in homes. We know by their actions that these young women understand their identity as daughters of God. My heart swells with love for these young women and for young women everywhere. I know that you are daughters of God, who loves you.

In conclusion let me share an experience that is tender and even sacred to me. When I was first called to serve as Young Women general president, I felt terrified and inadequate. I lay awake for many nights worrying, repenting, and crying. After several nights of this, I had a very moving experience. I started thinking about my young women nieces, then about the young women in my neighborhood and ward, then about the young women I saw regularly at the high school, and then I envisioned young women of the Church throughout the world, over half a million of them. The most wonderfully warm feeling began to envelop me and surge through me. I felt such exquisite love for Latter-day Saint young women everywhere, each one of you, and I knew that what I was feeling was our Heavenly Father's love for you. It was powerful and all-encompassing. For the first time I felt peace because I knew what Heavenly Father wanted me to do. He wanted me to witness to you of His great love for you. And so I testify to you again that I know beyond doubt that Heavenly Father knows you and loves you. You are His special daughter. He has a plan for you, and He will ever be there to lead you, guide you, and walk beside you.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: We should always remember that because Heavenly Father loves us so much, he will always do what's best for us. Likewise, we should be kind to others and do what's best for *them*. Sister Sharon G. Larsen talks about the love her own sister showed her in the 1998 General Young Women Meeting.

[END MUSIC]

(Sharon G. Larsen, April 1998 General Young Women Meeting)

I remember when I was about Beehive age (back when dinosaurs roamed the earth!), my older sister was leaving home to go away to school. I was crying inconsolably. As she tried to comfort me, she said, "Don't cry, Sharon; I'll be back." With tear-stained face, I looked up at her and said, "Oh, I know you'll be back, but who is going to mop the kitchen floor while you're gone?" I think that's called turning your heart to yourself!

I soon discovered it was more than having the floor mopped that I would miss. We need each other. We need to stand by each other.

A few years later this same older sister turned her heart to me when I asked her if I could borrow her car to go visit my friends. She agreed but said that I needed to have it back by 4 o'clock. I happily took off. We were having such a good time, I could hardly believe it when I looked at the clock and it was 6 o'clock! When I ran into the house, my sister wasn't there, but on the table was a beautiful chocolate cake, my favorite, with a note that said: "Don't worry. I know you were having a good time. I managed to get a ride. I love you." Now, that is turning your heart to your family, holding your banner high! She was worrying about my feelings when I was the one who had inconvenienced her!

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **Sister Larsen continues in the same address by talking about the power of love that can exist between family members.... Even among newborn twins.**

[END MUSIC]

(Sharon G. Larsen, April 1998 General Young Women Meeting)

Consider the lifesaving power in this story. A few years ago, twin girls Brielle and Kyrie were born prematurely to the Jackson family. They were placed in separate incubators to reduce the risk of infection. Kyrie, the larger sister at two pounds three ounces, quickly began gaining weight and calmly slept. But Brielle, who weighed only two pounds at birth, could not keep up with her. Suddenly one day Brielle's condition became critical. The nurse tried everything she could think of to stabilize Brielle. Still Brielle squirmed and fussed as her oxygen intake plummeted and her heart rate soared. Then the nurse remembered a procedure she had heard about. She said to the worried parents, "Let me just try putting Brielle in with her sister to see if that helps." The parents consented, and the nurse slipped the squirming baby into the incubator with the bigger sister. No sooner had the door of the incubator closed than Brielle snuggled up to Kyrie and calmed right down. Within minutes Brielle's blood-oxygen readings were the best they had been since she was born. As she dozed, Kyrie wrapped her tiny arm around her smaller sibling (see Nancy Sheehan, "A Sister's Helping Hand," *Reader's Digest*, May 1996, 15556).

The doctors and nurses had tried every medical and scientific device available to help the baby and nothing worked. Nothing could do for the struggling baby what her own sister

could do for her. This is what sisters can do for each other. This is what family members can do for each other.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **In a conference address, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said “because love is the great commandment, it ought to be at the center of all and everything we do in our own family, in our church callings, and in our livelihood. Love is the healing balm that repairs rifts in personal and family relationships. It is the bond that unites families, communities, and nations...love is the fire that warms our lives with unparalleled joy and divine hope. Love should be our walk and our talk.” In the 2003 General Young Women Meeting Susan W. Tanner relates a selfless act of love her son showed to his sister.**

[END MUSIC]

(Susan W. Tanner, April 2003 General Young Women Meeting)

Could you be more steadfast in Christ in your own homes, with your own family members? When you promise to take His name and characteristics upon you, it means you should speak a little softer, act a little kinder, serve your siblings more selflessly, and appreciate and help your parents more openly.

Our son did this long ago on a family trip. We had traveled many miles to see a beautiful castle. By the time we finally arrived, one of our younger daughters was tired and cross. She refused to get out of the car to take the short hike to the site we had come so far to see. Most of us felt impatient with her. But with gentleness our 14-year-old son lifted her on his back and carried her to the castle. That tense moment was softened by his quiet expression of love. That now lives in each of our memories more than the view of the castle.

Sometimes it is hardest in our own homes to be our best selves. It requires that diligent effort of “pressing forward.” But when you keep your covenants, you will learn to more fully love those to whom you are eternally bound. Then you will also be able to extend your love beyond that circle to others.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **President Thomas S. Monson shares a story of some young women that showed their love by carrying another in a time of need. This story comes from the 1999 General Young Women Meeting.**

[END MUSIC]

(President Thomas S. Monson, April 1999 General Young Women Meeting)

Some years ago a lovely young woman, Jami Palmer, then 12 years of age, was wheeled into my office by her parents. She had been diagnosed with cancer. Surgery would be required. The treatments would be many and the time of recovery long. It was a solemn moment as we visited. Father requested me to join him in blessing his crestfallen daughter who had just had her dreams, her hopes, her plans placed on hold. All of us were weeping. The priesthood blessing was provided.

I have maintained contact with Jami and her family. The years have flown by. She has rendered unlimited service to others through being a spokesperson for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which blesses youth afflicted with life-threatening diseases. Jami has grown into a beautiful young woman. She is now a student at Brigham Young University. She is healthy. She has been through the refiner's fire and has had her life prolonged. She gives thanks to all who aided her through these difficult years and especially to her Heavenly Father for her very life today.

A turning point in Jami's life came early in her treatment for cancer. She and the youth in her ward had planned a hike to Timpanogos Cave. You who have made that hike know the way is steep, and it seems to take forever to reach the cave. Sadly Jami said to her friends, "I won't be able to make the hike with you."

"Why not?" they asked.

Jami replied, "I can't walk."

There was a silent moment, and then one replied, "Jami, if you can't walk, then we'll carry you." And they did--up and back!

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **You're listening to stories from the General Young Women Meetings. This collection is about love. When we understand the infinite love of our Heavenly Father, we realize that everyone is a child of God and should be treated as such. Sister Susan W. Tanner gave an example of this in the 2001 General Young Women Meeting.**

[END MUSIC]

(Susan W. Tanner, April 2007, General Young Women Meeting)

In relationships we must remember that others are also children of our Heavenly Father. At the first of our marriage, my husband said quite often, "I didn't marry you for your looks." Finally I teased him a bit by saying, "That really doesn't sound too flattering." He explained what I really already knew, that this was intended to be the highest compliment he could give me. He said, "I love you for who you are intrinsically and eternally." The Lord said: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; . . . for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh

on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). In families, friendships, dating, and marriage, we should value not just beauty and résumés, but rather character, good values, and each other's inherited divine natures.

In a stake in Chile the young women did this at camp by keeping a book of each other's virtuous qualities. Each day they got better acquainted and wrote down the intrinsic good they were learning about each person there. At the end of the camp, they shared their thoughts, helping each person to see more of the divinity within herself. Their leader said, "We were literally basking in this wonderful spirit of kindness and goodwill. I can honestly say that I never heard a word of complaint from the girls! They were flourishing in a sweet spirit of mutual acceptance that is not often present among teenage girls. There was no competition, no contention. Our camp had become a little bit of heaven" (personal correspondence). The girls recognized and reaffirmed the divine natures of each other, and the Spirit filled the camp as these virtuous thoughts were expressed.

C. S. Lewis wisely said: "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship. . . . There are no *ordinary* people. . . . Your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses" ("The Weight of Glory," in *Screwtape Proposes a Toast and Other Pieces* (1974), 109–10).

Young women everywhere who know they and others are daughters of a loving Heavenly Father show their love for Him by living virtuous, service-oriented, exemplary lives. I have been impressed with young women who were dressed modestly in a very hot and humid part of Brazil. They said, "Modesty is not about the climate. It's about the heart." These young women knew they were daughters of God.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: President Thomas S. Monson tells us about a young woman who made a long-term difference in the life of a friend through simple acts of service and love. This is from the 2009 General Young Women Meeting.

[END MUSIC]

(President Thomas S. Monson, April 2009, General Young Women Meeting)

A friend told me of an experience she had many years ago when she was a teenager. In her ward was a young woman named Sandra who had suffered an injury at birth, resulting in her being somewhat mentally handicapped. Sandra longed to be included with the other girls, but she looked handicapped. She acted handicapped. Her clothing was always ill fitting. She sometimes made inappropriate comments. Although Sandra attended their Mutual activities, it was always the responsibility of the teacher to keep her company and to try to make her feel welcome and valued, since the girls did not.

Then something happened: a new girl of the same age moved into the ward. Nancy was a cute, redheaded, self-confident, popular girl who fit in easily. All the girls wanted to be her friend, but Nancy didn't limit her friendships. In fact, she went out of her way to befriend Sandra and to make certain she always felt included in everything. Nancy seemed to genuinely *like* Sandra.

Of course the other girls took note and began wondering why *they* hadn't ever befriended Sandra. It now seemed not only acceptable but desirable. Eventually they began to realize what Nancy, by her example, was teaching them: that Sandra was a valuable daughter of our Heavenly Father, that she had a contribution to make, and that she deserved to be treated with love and kindness and positive attention.

By the time Nancy and her family moved from the neighborhood a year or so later, Sandra was a permanent part of the group of young women. My friend said that from then on she and the other girls made certain no one was ever left out, regardless of what might make her different. A valuable, eternal lesson had been learned.

True love can alter human lives and change human nature.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: One of the greatest stories about love and compassion is the story of the Good Samaritan. A man was beaten and robbed while traveling. Several people passed without stopping. Finally a Samaritan came by and provided help. In the 2000 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Sharon G. Larsen likens this parable to us in modern times.

[END MUSIC]

(Sharon G. Larsen, April 2000 General Young Women Meeting)

A certain girl went down from her locker toward the lunchroom and fell among thieves, who stripped her of her confidence and self-esteem when she overheard them making fun of her and of the way she dressed, and they walked off leaving her alone and friendless. And by chance there came down a certain girl that way dressed in fine clothes, and when she saw her, she passed by on the other side of the hall.

And likewise, a girl from the "in" crowd of popular girls, when she was at the place, came and looked on her and passed by on the other side without speaking.

But a certain young woman came down the hall where she was, and when she saw her, she had compassion and went to her and bound up her wounds when she said, "Would you eat lunch with me?" (Author's adaptation of the parable of the good Samaritan; see Luke 10:30-37).

Looking more closely at this familiar parable, why didn't the other girls stop to help? Are we so intent on our own problems that we do not notice or think anyone else has any? Do we judge the girl in need to be socially beneath us and worry what the popular kids would think if we stopped to help? Maybe the "dream guy" of the school is waiting to walk you to class and you couldn't possibly keep him waiting!

Each one who passed the girl in need had one question in her mind: *If I stop, what will happen to me?* The girl who did stop to help also had one question: *If I don't stop, what will happen to her?* When we are confident of our Father in Heaven's infinite love, we can reach out to others.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: In the 2003 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Susan W. Tanner shares a personal experience about her husband who showed compassion on a family who had wronged them.

[END MUSIC]

(Susan w. Tanner, April 2003 General Young Women Meeting)

A number of years ago our family lived in Brazil for a short while. Two weeks before we were supposed to return home, we were in an auto accident. As we drove home in pouring rain from sacrament meeting, we entered a neighborhood intersection. A car pulled out from behind a parked vehicle and hit us broadside. Fortunately no one in either of the cars was injured, but the automobiles were both quite badly dented. As my husband, John, got out to discuss our plight with the other driver, I kept reminding him that it was not our fault. Soon he returned to the car and slowly drove back to the little farmhouse where we were living, with metal grinding against the tires on every rotation. The other car followed. All John said was, "I'll explain later."

When we got home, John found our little envelope of emergency cash, and he paid the family to get their car repaired. They happily left. I was astonished. Then John gathered our family together. He was somewhat apologetic as he explained his actions. "I know this accident was not our fault, but as I was negotiating with this family, the only thought in my head was that only a little over an hour ago I had covenanted with Heavenly Father to always act as He would. I knew that if He were standing in my position, He would have had compassion on this family and would have done all He could to help them." What an exemplary husband and father! He had remembered his covenants. Acting with Christlike love, he had softened hearts.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Showing Christlike love is how we become true disciples of the savior. This collection concludes with a reminder from President Thomas S. Monson to say 'I

love you' to those close to you. This advice is from the 1997 General Young Women Meeting.

[END MUSIC]

(President Thomas S. Monson, April 1997 General Young Women Meeting)

In the Clarkston, Utah, cemetery, Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, is buried. Behind his imposing and beautiful monument are the graves of others. One contains the tender inscription: "A light from our household is gone; a voice we loved is stilled. A place is vacant in our hearts that never can be filled."

My dear young sisters, don't wait until that light from your household is gone; don't wait until that voice you love is stilled before you say, "I love you, Mother; I love you, Father." Now is the time to think and the time to thank. I trust you do both.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: In John Chapter 13, Christ said "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

Thanks for listening to the Mormon Channel. Today's episode of "Stories from the General Young Women Meetings" has been about love. For more information go to radio.lds.org. Tell your friends about us!

[END MUSIC]