

Episode 7

Stories from General Young Women Meetings

SERVICE

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: From the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, welcome to stories from the General Young Women Meetings. This episode is on the topic of service. There are countless ways to serve others. The young women of the church are encouraged to always be on the lookout for ways to serve. From the 1999 General Young Women Meeting, President Thomas S. Monson illustrates some examples of service he has observed.

[END MUSIC]

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

One morning as I walked to the temple, I saw a group of young women who, early that morning, had participated in baptisms for those who had passed beyond. Their hair was wet. Their smiles were radiant. Their hearts were filled with joy. One girl turned back to face the temple and expressed her feelings. "This has been the happiest day of my life," she said.

There are other opportunities to serve the living. You can do so and can bring untold joy to them. Extended care facilities become a home for those who are ill or aged and require such care. They yearn for the days of their youth. They long for the company of their families and the comforts of their homes.

At a church service I attended in a care center, after the wheelchair-bound residents received the sacrament, a young woman your age played a solo on her violin. The elderly sisters were so appreciative. They declared aloud their gratitude with comments such as "Beautiful," "Wonderful," "I love you." Such distractions did not deter the violinist; rather, they enabled her to reach new heights in her performance.

That day she said to me: "I have never played better in my life. Something seemed to lift me beyond myself and my own abilities. I felt the inspiration of my Heavenly Father's love."

I reminded her, "When you are in the service of your fellow beings you are only in the service of your God."

She nodded her acknowledgement, carefully placed her violin in its case, and, with tears of joy coursing down her cheeks, returned to her seat.

May we remember to *reach outward*.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **In the 2004 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Susan W. Tanner shares another story of service in behalf of one with special needs.**

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(Susan W. Tanner, April 2004 General Young Women Meeting)

One Young Women group in Oklahoma sought Heavenly Father in prayer to determine how to best include a new Beehive who was deaf. They worked hard to be His instruments and His hands (quite literally) in helping this young woman. A miracle swept over their entire ward as they became the angels that would bear up Alexis, the new Beehive.

Alexis said: "I was nervous and excited to start Young Women. Mom always comes with me to sign for me because I am deaf. After the opening prayer and song, Sister Hoskin, my Young Women president, said, 'Alexis, we have a gift for you.' Then all the girls stood up and started signing something. I knew it was special. Later I learned it was the Young Women theme. All the girls in our ward had learned it to surprise me.

"I know Heavenly Father loves me because of wonderful people here on earth that show me love, especially the girls in my Young Women [class] and my Young Women leaders who sign for me and help me learn the gospel" (letter to Young Women general presidency).

Sister Hoskin, the Young Women president, had prayed diligently to know how to help Alexis. She wrote:

"I had been the Young Women president in my ward for only one week when I began to worry about one of my upcoming Beehives. Alexis is hearing impaired, and I worried about how I could help her fit in and show her that she was one of us. After being troubled for many days and after many prayers, I woke in the middle of the night from a dream where I saw my group of young women standing together, doing the Young Women theme in sign language. I knew the answer to my prayers.

"It was a big challenge. It took hours—one entire night of Mutual, then weekly practices before we were ready. When Alexis's birthday came, everyone was excited and nervous about our surprise. I pulled Alexis and

her mom in front of the girls and said (signing to Alexis), 'We have a gift for you. Now you are one of us.' Then we stood and repeated the theme and did it in sign language. The Spirit was so strong, and there weren't many voices because we were all crying, but the girls did a beautiful job. Alexis was beaming. She knew she was one of us.

"We learned that Heavenly Father loves all of us and that there are times we will be His voice and His hands to help others feel that love. We learned that serving brings the greatest joy. I learned the importance of following promptings, even when it involves a lot of work and seems improbable" (letter to Young Women general presidency).

Imagine how through the years Alexis's mother has prayed for her daughter, having all the same hopes and dreams for her that each mother has for her daughter. She said:

"As the mother of a handicapped daughter, I am used to doing a little extra to help things work out for her. Because she is deaf, I am often at her side interpreting for her. You can imagine the feelings that flooded through me as the young women all began to sign the Young Women theme for her. As I stood there watching with tears in my eyes, the verse that ran through my mind was from Matthew 25:40: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

"The remarkable love and service these young women have shown just began on that day. Many of them have given of their time and effort to learn sign language and now help with interpreting at church for Alexis. My prayers for Alexis have always been that she would be happy, be progressing, and know that she is loved.

"As a parent, my testimony of the Savior has been strengthened as I have seen the service and love of these girls and their leaders. At times, our concern for our daughter has been a heavy burden, but it has been made lighter by the actions of these faithful young women and their wise leaders."

This mother had prayed for the Lord's help, and now through the help of others, angels on earth, she saw all things working together for the good of her daughter.

Other young women in this ward told how they grew in giving this service. The Laurel class president related that learning the theme in sign language was hard work, but they felt the Spirit helping them in this effort. She said, "We did not rush through the theme just to say it like usual. We thought about the words and signed it for someone else so that [she] could

know the words too, and that made me happy to know that she could understand our theme and know that she was a daughter of God too."

Even the young men got involved. They learned how to sign "Will you dance with me?" in preparation for an upcoming dance at a ward Mutual activity. Consequently, Alexis danced every dance. The priests learned to sign the sacrament prayers for her. The spirit of love enveloped the entire ward.

In every ward or branch, in every home or family, there is an Alexis with a special need, physical, emotional, or spiritual, who is praying and trusting that somehow through her challenges, eventually "all things shall work together for [her] good." Each of us can be an instrument in the Lord's hands, an earthly angel who can help the miracles happen.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Service doesn't always require a lot of work. Sometimes it's just simple acts that let people know they are loved.

For example, in the 2000 meeting, Sharon G. Larsen tells about a young woman who was greatly blessed from a friend visiting her in the hospital.

[END MUSIC]

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

We have received many letters from young women who are seriously trying to stand as a witness and say what He would say and do what He would do.

Cathy wrote a letter telling about a "good Samaritan" named Michelle. Cathy had been hospitalized much longer than she had expected to be. Some friends dwindled away, busy in their own lives; but Michelle came often and brought fun and cheer. She decorated the dreary hospital room with Mormon-Ad posters, balloons, and other paraphernalia. One day when Cathy was particularly low, Michelle thought to bring her scriptures. Cathy said: "Bringing her scriptures and reading them to me made me want what she had. I wanted to love the scriptures like Michelle does. Without that act of kindness and caring from Michelle, my testimony wouldn't be what it is today."

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **Not only does service benefit those we are serving, but the giver benefits as well. In the booklet “for Strength of youth”, it says “as you devote yourself to serving others, you will draw closer to Heavenly Father. Your heart will be filled with love. Your capacities will increase, and your life and the lives of those around you will be blessed.” From the 1998 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Sharon G. Larsen provides a short example of simple service.**

[END MUSIC]

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

Lindsey was holding her banner high when she served her mother. She wrote: "My mom took a nap. I had cleaned the house. When she got up, she was surprised." Now listen to what Lindsey said: "I had a good feeling inside." How do you think her mother felt? How do you think Heavenly Father felt about what she did?

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **Besides the ‘good feeling’ we get when we serve others, we can also learn a lot from service. President James E. Faust now explains how one young woman learned firsthand about how to care for a family. This is from the 1998 General Young Women Meeting.**

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(President James E. Faust, April 1998 General Young Women Meeting)

Karen Graham, who now serves as a stake Young Women president, writes of the importance of homemaking skills in her life:

"In my senior year in high school, when I was a 17-year-old Laurel, I arrived home from school one day to find that my mother had died very suddenly and unexpectedly of a cerebral hemorrhage. My two older sisters were married and living away from home. This left me the oldest at home to take care of the house, my grieving father, and two younger brothers ages 12 and 13.

"For the next two and a half years, I took care of the house, did all the laundry, bought groceries and fixed the meals. . . . Can you imagine letting a 17-year-old be in charge of the grocery budget? This sweet father of mine never said an unkind word. He never complained when I turned all his white shirts pink in the laundry or when dinner miserably failed. All my friends in high school were planning for their after-graduation lives. Some were going to Utah State University. . . . I had considered going to

Ricks College, but in light of the family circumstances I chose to stay at home and continue to help.

"Two years after Mother's passing, I started dating a return[ed] missionary, Garry. On our second date, he asked me what I had done with my Saturday. . . . He was a little surprised when I told him that I'd dusted and vacuumed and grocery shopped and done laundry all day. He thought I was just a real homebody. Six months later, this wonderful man took me to the temple and we started our life together. He was thrilled to have a wife that knew how to cook and handle the budget.

"One evening, the first year we were married, we had some newlywed friends over for dinner. Several of the couples started talking about what a hard time they had had adjusting to marriage. Garry and I looked at each other in disbelief. . . . Adjusting to marriage? What was that? Our first year had gone so smoothly! As we talked about it later, we determined that the reason was that I had come into the marriage with homemaking skills. . . . I didn't have the stress of experimenting with and/or burning dinner, ruining laundry, or budgeting grocery money. I'd done all that experimenting on a sensitive, patient, wise father. Now Garry and I could concentrate on just our relationship, and it was wonderful. Putting my interests aside and thinking about the needs of my family had truly been a blessing for me later."

Her service to her father during this difficult time was a part of the angelic cause of doing good, that great preparation you are making to become great women.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: President Faust continues by sharing an experience from a young woman who gained great insight from serving her grandfather.

[END MUSIC]

(President James E. Faust, April 1998 General Young Women Meeting)

As young women, you have the privilege of working on projects as part of the Young Womanhood Recognition Award. Anna Nichols of Centerville, Utah, writes about a special experience she has had:

"I did a Laurel project last year that has brought me closer to my grandma who[m] I never knew. She passed away when my mom was about five years old from a severe type of cancer. My mom has a collection of old slides and letters that she had kept. I went through these and picked out

pictures of her and her family and letters that she had written to her sister sharing her feelings and thoughts before she died.

"I put all these in a scrapbook in memory of her and I gave it to my grandpa. To watch his face as he turned each page was the most awesome feeling as he told me the stories of each picture. We cried together. I could tell that he misses her so much and how with this book she is partly back into his life again.

"Because of this book I have a personal relationship with my grandma. I feel her spirit with me. I know she has protected me and helped me when I am in need. Now when I go and visit my grandpa we always talk about her and share stories. I always look forward to this time I get to spend with him."

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: **In the same meeting, Sister Margaret D. Nadauld shares an example of a young woman who learned to serve, and in the process, greatly blessed her family.**

[END MUSIC]

(Margaret D. Nadauld, April 1998 General Young Women Meeting)

Many of you young women have written and shared with us your family experiences and some of the things you are learning as you have turned your hearts to your families. Twelve-year-old Katie Quinn wrote:

"My mother was expecting a baby. . . . She was bedridden much of the time . . . and all of a sudden there was a ton of responsibility on my shoulders because I am the oldest. I was also just starting middle school and had loads of homework.

"I knew I needed to help a lot, and I even prayed to know what I should do. I felt an answer came when my grandmother, who was staying with us for a few weeks, told me a story about one of my ancestors who at age 11 had driven a covered wagon by himself across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley. His parents had died along the way, and he was left to care for four younger sisters, including a baby, and take them to Zion. This story made me realize that I could be like my great-great-great-grandfather and push forward.

"I decided it would help my family if I made sack lunches for my sisters or do other duties like folding clothing and ironing and other extra chores.

"I gathered my younger sisters and brother every morning before school and carried on our family scripture reading, even though my father had left earlier for work and my mother was too sick to lead us.

"My family . . . grew closer together because [we] had to help each other. The greatest blessing happened on May 1, 1997, when Hannah Ada Quinn was born" (personal letter in author's possession).

Thank you for the letter, Katie. She learned about determination and courage and loyalty to family from her third great-grandfather who lived so long ago, and then she used those qualities as she helped her family who needed her. Many of you are doing similar things to bless and strengthen your families.

Do you realize that Katie and you are preparing for your future family by learning and practicing on your parents and brothers and sisters?

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: In the church, we're admonished to spend our days in the service of others. From the 2001 General Young Women Meeting, President Gordon B. Hinckley gives two contrasting examples of people he knew in high school. One learned to serve...and the other did not.

[END MUSIC]

(President Gordon B. Hinckley, April 2001 General Young Women Meeting)

Someone gave me a copy of my high school yearbook the other day. It seems that when people get tired of old books, they send them to me. I spent an hour thumbing through it, looking at the pictures of my friends of 73 years ago, my high school class of 1928.

Most of those in that yearbook have now lived their lives and gone beyond. Some seem to have lived almost without purpose, while others lived with great achievements.....

In the yearbook of which I have spoken is the picture of a young woman. She was bright and effervescent and beautiful. She was a charmer. Life for her could be summed up in one short word—fun. She dated the boys and danced away the days and nights, studying a little but not too much, just enough to get grades that would take her through graduation. She married a boy of her own kind. Alcohol took possession of her life. She could not leave it alone. She was a slave to it. Her body succumbed to its treacherous grip. Sadly, her life faded without achievement.

There is a picture of another girl in that yearbook. She was not particularly beautiful. But she had a wholesome look about her, a sparkle in her eyes, and a smile on her face. She knew why she was in school. She was there to learn. She dreamed of the kind of woman she wanted to be and patterned her life accordingly.

She also knew how to have fun, but knew when to stop and put her mind on other things.

There was a boy in school at the time. He had come from a small rural town. He had very little money. He brought lunch in a brown paper bag. He looked a little like the farm from which he had come. There was nothing especially handsome or dashing about him. He was a good student. He had set a goal for himself. It was lofty and, at times, appeared almost impossible of attainment.

These two fell in love. People said, "What does he see in her?" Or, "What does she see in him?" They each saw something wonderful which no one else saw.

Upon graduating from the university, they married. They scrimped and worked. Money was hard to come by. He went on to graduate school. She continued to work for a time, and then their children came. She gave her attention to them.

A few years ago, I was riding a plane home from the East. It was late at night. I walked down the aisle in the semidarkness. I saw a woman asleep with her head on the shoulder of her husband. She awakened as I approached. I immediately recognized the girl I had known in high school so long before. I recognized the boy I had also known. They were now approaching old age. As we talked, she explained that their children were grown, that they were grandparents. She proudly told me that they were returning from the East, where he had gone to deliver a paper. There at a great convention he had been honored by his peers from across the nation.

I learned that they had been active in the Church, serving in whatever capacity they were asked to serve. By every measure, they were successful. They had accomplished the goals which they had set for themselves. They had been honored and respected and had made a tremendous contribution to the society of which they were a part. She had become the woman of whom she had dreamed. She had exceeded that dream.

As I returned to my seat on the plane, I thought of those two girls of whom I have spoken to you tonight. The life of the one had been spelled out in a three-letter word: *F-U-N*. It had been lived aimlessly, without stability,

without contribution to society, without ambition. It had ended in misery and pain and early death.

The life of the other had been difficult. It had meant scrimping and saving. It had meant working and struggling to keep going. It had meant simple food and plain clothing and a very modest apartment in the years of her husband's initial effort to get started in his profession. But out of that seemingly sterile soil there had grown a plant, yes, two plants, side by side, that blossomed and bloomed in a beautiful and wonderful way.

Those beautiful blossoms spoke of service to fellowmen, of unselfishness one to another, of love and respect and faith in one's companion, of happiness as they met the needs of others in the various activities which they pursued.

As I pondered the conversation with these two, I determined within myself to do a little better, to be a little more dedicated, to set my sights a little higher, to love my wife a little more dearly, to help her and treasure her and look after her.

[BEG MUSIC]

NARRATOR: May we follow President Hinckley's advice to be a little better as we serve others. Today's collection of stories from General Young Women Meetings was on service. Thank-you for listening to the Mormon Channel. For more information go to radio.lds.org. And tell your friends about us!

[END MUSIC]