

I am thrilled to be able to be part of a celebration of Women of Christ and their examples. I have been studying Daughters in My Kingdom for a while as part of my own personal gospel and scripture study. I love this book. I am grateful for the time that was put into making it available to every woman in the church.

I thought I would start today by giving a little bit of information about this book. DIMK was compiled and published by assignment from Pres. Hinckley to the RS Gen Presidency under the direction of Sister Julie B. Beck. I recently watched an interview that Sis Beck gave along with her counselors about DIMK and its process and purpose. After receiving the assignment from Pres Hinckley, Sis Susan W. Tanner was called and set apart to write it. Sis Beck compared the job of Sis Tanner to the job Mormon undertook when he compiled the records of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. There were many volumes of records that were kept by women of the church from the beginning and it was a big project to create a work that has a central theme and is accessible to all women all over the world. When Sis Beck was asked why this record is important to us, she quotes Alma 37 where Alma is passing the records of the people to his son. He says:

8 And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.

With that little bit of background, I have chosen to talk today about how using this book in our study can bless our lives and help us come closer to God by enlarging our memory.

The First Presidency said the following in the foreward of the book:

We pray that this book will be a blessing to you and to those whose lives you touch. We encourage you to study this book and allow its timeless truths and inspiring examples to influence your lives.

The following is from the Preface of the book:

As sisters learn from the history of Relief Society, they may discover examples, expressions, and principles that are especially meaningful to them. Inspired by these discoveries and by the teachings of ancient and latter-day prophets, they can seek, receive, and act on personal revelation. They can receive guidance as they strive to become the people the Lord wants them to become and do the things He would have them do.

I want to focus on how we can use the examples, expressions and principles in this book to seek, receive and act on personal revelation.

Many of you know that I love to cook. I have always loved to cook. I have always loved food and experimenting with food and flavors. It is a passion of mine. When you are cooking there are two parts of any recipe; the ingredients and the process. As I have been reading and studying this book I have come to understand that following the principles and patterns that are established by the heritage of the women of the church is like a recipe. The principles are the ingredients and the patterns are the procedures of the recipe. There are many different recipes in this book. And by studying it, you will be able to find a recipe of your own.

Because I am the speaker, we are going to talk about a recipe I found in this book. I want to share two examples of the principles we can learn from the women of our church and how their patterns of action can teach us.

The first is to See a Need and Act:

I loved the many examples of sisters in the church seeing needs inside and outside the church and filling them. I want to share a couple of these.

First- The Relief Society of the Church was founded on this principle. During the time that the temple was being built in Nauvoo, there were many women's organizations and clubs being formed. A group of sisters including Sis Margaret Cook were talking one day about the needs of the men doing the work at the temple site. There was need of provisions and sewing for the temple. These sisters were prayerful and decided to meet together and meet this need. As was the custom of the time, they developed a set of bylaws to govern the group. The women asked Joseph Smith to review what they had written and were told their offering to the Lord had been accepted but that the Lord had a greater plan for them. He asked them to gather to meet with him on March 17, 1842 and he established the Relief Society of the church.

Elder John A. Widtsoe of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the foundational work of the Relief Society: "Relief of poverty, relief of illness; relief of doubt, relief of ignorance—relief of all that hinders the joy and progress of woman.

These women of the first Relief Society set about finding needs and meeting them after hearing this charge.

Here are a few examples of needs that were found and met by the early women in the church:

- In 1902 the Relief Society sponsored programs for women to receive training as nurses and nurse's aides. They offered this training for free in exchange for 30 days of free nursing service. During WWI these nurses were a huge part of the relief of the Red Cross and in helping the sick and wounded of that war.
- Women in the late 1800s started to grow their own wheat and to store it away. During WWI when there was a great shortage of wheat, these women were able to sell 200,000 bushels of wheat to the US Government and then use the money to purchase materials to make clothing and bedding for those in need.
- Women took up the charge to lobby for voting rights with other women in the country. Delegates of women from Utah traveled to Washington DC to stand up and fight for the rights for women to vote and to own land.
- Women of the Relief Society also published newspapers and magazines. In 1872 Eliza R. Snow started to publish The Exponent. It was the first newspaper to be published and written entirely by women. She said... "I desire to do all in my power to help elevate the condition of my own people, especially women."⁴³ She later wrote, "I have desired with all my heart to do those things that would advance women in moral and spiritual as well as educational work and tend to the rolling on of the work of God upon the earth."⁴⁴

The women of the Relief Society were told to be leaders and examples to women across the world. The women of the Relief Society took that charge to heart and became examples of faith and compassion across the world.

Sister Belle Spafford (the 9th RS Pres) learned a great lesson from President George Albert Smith about sharing the Church's values with the women of the world. Soon after she was sustained as Relief Society general president, "a letter came from the National Council of Women, announcing their annual meeting to be held in New York City.

"Sister Spafford had attended those meetings before, and in view of her previous experience, she and her counselors carefully considered the invitation for several weeks.

"They decided to recommend to the President of the Church that the Relief Society terminate its membership in those councils. They prepared a statement of recommendation, listing all of the reasons for so doing.

"Trembling and uncertain, Sister Spafford placed the paper on the desk of President George Albert Smith, saying, 'The Relief Society Presidency wishes to recommend that the General Board terminate its membership in the National Council and in the International Council of Women, for the reasons listed on this paper.'

“President Smith carefully read the paper. Had they not held membership for well over half a century? he inquired.

“Sister Spafford explained how costly it was to go to New York, the time it took, and described the humiliation they occasionally experienced. She recommended that they withdraw because ‘we don’t get a thing from these councils.’

“This wise, old prophet tipped back in his chair and looked at her with a disturbed expression. ‘You want to withdraw because you don’t get anything out of it?’ he questioned.

“‘That is our feeling,’ she replied.

“‘Tell me,’ he said, ‘what is it that you are putting into it?

“‘Sister Spafford,’ he continued, ‘you surprise me. Do you always think in terms of what you get? Don’t you think also in terms of what you have to give?’

“He returned that paper to her and extended his hand. With considerable firmness he said, ‘You continue your membership in these councils and make your influence felt.’”¹²

She did make her influence felt. She participated in the National Council of Women and the International Council of Women and held leadership positions in those organizations for years. She stood strong for the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and for the purposes of Relief Society.

Women in these organizations knew that their friend Belle Spafford would stand by the Church’s principles, and they needed that kind of wisdom and strength. In 1954 she was chosen as the leader of the United States delegation at the International Council of Women in Helsinki, Finland. As she led a grand march at the opening of the conference, her thoughts went back in time:

“As I looked out at the glittering audience made up of people of many nations ... , my mind suddenly flashed back to the words of our pioneer [Relief Society] leaders ... ‘standing as we do at the head of the women of the world,’ ... ‘for the rights of the women of Zion and the rights of the women of all nations.’ ... I knew that our pioneer women leaders had been given by divine insight a knowledge of the destiny of Relief Society. ... It is my conviction that the time had come for Relief Society’s influence to be felt worldwide among womankind.”¹⁴

Just this past week, the church named Sis Sharon Eubank to be the head of LDS Charities. She is the first woman to hold a position over a department of the church since the 1960s. She was able to host a United Nations summit this past week on Women’s Issues and how aid can be managed and sent to the poor and disenfranchised of the world. Just as in times past, women of the Church are standing at the head of women in the world.

The history of these women of faith teach us that when we see a need we should act with faith and prayer and courage. They also teach us the value of Covenant Keeping. In Mosiah 18, Alma meets with those who desire to be baptized at the waters of Mormon. After the people are baptized he instructs them on what it means to be part of Christ’s church and explains the covenants that are made at baptism by each of us. He counsels the people that to belong to the church of Christ we must be willing to bear one another’s burdens, to mourn with those that mourn, be unified with their hearts knit together in love, to meet together each week and preach faith, repentance, baptism and redemption through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. And to give of our substance to the poor so that every need is met.

Let’s talk about a couple of examples of these principles.

Mourn with those that Mourn and Bear one another’s burdens-- This is the sacred way that we follow the Savior. Like Elder Widtsoe said, we relieve the poverty and illness but we also relieve the doubt and ignorance. When we follow the examples of the sisters of Relief Society we act in a way that the Savior would have us do. We may be called to alleviate

poverty or aid in illness or we may be called to offer love and support in the face of doubt. I love this example from the book.

President Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Church, told of a time when he saw Relief Society sisters extend unselfish, Christlike love to a family:

“It was my privilege not long ago to visit one of our settlements in an outlying Stake of Zion where a great deal of sickness prevailed at the time, and although we had been traveling many days and we reached the settlement late in the evening, we were solicited to go round with the president to visit some of the sick. We found a poor sister prostrate upon a bed of sickness, in a very critical condition. Her poor husband sat by her bedside almost distracted at the dreadful illness of his wife who was the mother of a number of little children clustered around. The family seemed to be in a very destitute condition.

“A nice matronly woman soon came into the house, carrying with her a basket containing nourishing food and some delicacies for the use of the afflicted family. On inquiry we learned that she had been detailed by the Relief Society of the ward to watch over and administer to the sick woman through the night. She was there prepared to look after the little children, to see that they were properly washed and fed and put to bed; to tidy up the house and make everything as comfortable as possible for the afflicted woman and her family. We also learned that another good sister would be detailed to relieve her the following day; and so on, from day to day, this poor, afflicted family received the kindest care and attention from the sisters of the Relief Society until health should again come to relieve the sick one from her sufferings.

“We also learned that this Relief Society was so organized and disciplined that all the sick in the settlement were receiving similar attention and ministrations for their comfort and relief. Never before had I seen so clearly exemplified the utility and beauty of this grand organization as in the example we here witnessed, and I thought what a gracious thing it was that the Lord inspired the Prophet Joseph Smith to establish such an organization in the Church.”⁶

This is why the Relief Society is different from other women's organizations of the world. We strive to act in the place of our Savior.

Impart of our Substance: The Relief Society sisters throughout its history have been giving and helping those in need. I loved one account in the book from the time of Brigham Young. Most of us have heard the story of the General Conference when Pres Young told all in attendance that they were going to rescue the Saints on the snowy plains. They left immediately from the Tabernacle. I loved the account of what the women did in that moment. While all of the men were outside organizing to make the trip, the women in the Tabernacle took off their petticoats and gathered all of the blankets and bedding they could and sent it with the men. They sent the petticoats they were wearing in order to offer extra layers of warmth in a rush. How awesome is that!

As part of our baptismal covenant we are asked to meet together often and to preach Faith Repentance and Redemption. Pres Packer said the following: “This great circle of sisters will be a protection for each of you and for your families. The Relief Society might be likened to a refuge—the place of safety and protection—the sanctuary of ancient times. You will be safe within it. It encircles each sister like a protecting wall.”⁶

I feel especially touched by an example from my own experience in this regard. In our Stake in NC, our Relief Society met together often for conferences and to attend the temple. For the General Relief Society Broadcast each September we would travel 45 min to an hour to meet together to listen. We would sit shoulder to shoulder crammed into the pews of our Stake Center passing Kleenex between us as we listened to the words of the prophet and the RS Gen Pres. We learned about Faith and Repentance and the Redemption of the Atonement. We learned how to take the refuge of our place with the sisters and extend that to our homes. I often think of that power that women have and give to each other as a refuge in times of sadness or struggle. We are blessed to be a part of this beautiful sisterhood. That principle

was never more clear to me that sitting shoulder to shoulder with 300 RS sisters in the dark and listening to the Prophet counsel us.

All of these example and patterns for following the principles of God result in Charity. That is the result of the recipe I found when reading and studying this book. When we study the lives and examples of the Daughters of God we allow Charity to come into our hearts and change us. We find greater strength to do good and to be good. We know how to bless others and through this process we are sanctified. It doesn't matter if you are man or woman. When you follow these examples of Christlike service and action, you will be closer to God.

I want to close with the following from Sis Beck which is especially meaningful to me.

“Relief Society should be organized, aligned, and mobilized to strengthen families and help our homes to be sacred sanctuaries from the world. I learned this years ago when I was newly married. My parents, who had been my neighbors, announced that they would be moving to another part of the world. I had relied on my mother’s nurturing, wise, and encouraging example. Now she was going to be gone for a long time. This was before e-mail, fax machines, cell phones, and Web cameras, and mail delivery was notoriously slow. One day before she left, I sat weeping with her and asked, ‘Who will be my mother?’ Mother thought carefully, and with the Spirit and power of revelation which comes to women of this kind, she said to me, ‘If I never come back, if you never see me again, if I’m never able to teach you another thing, you tie yourself to Relief Society. Relief Society will be your mother.’

“Mother knew that if I was sick, the sisters would take care of me, and when I had my babies, they would help me. But my mother’s greatest hope was that the sisters in Relief Society would be powerful, spiritual leaders for me. I began from that time to learn abundantly from women of stature and faith.”

I bear you my testimony of the divinity of the Relief Society and the power of the women of God. I pray that as I spoke today that you have been able to see how the example of great women of God can change not just our families and our communities but also our hearts.