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The Choice to Be Grateful

Our Father in Heaven commands us to be thankful in all things (see 1 Thessalonians 5:18), and He requires that we give thanks for the blessings we receive (see D&C 46:32). We know that all of His commandments are intended to make us happy, and we also know that to break commandments leads to misery.

So to be happy and to avoid misery, we must have a grateful heart. We have seen in our lives the connection between gratitude and happiness. All of us would like to feel gratitude, yet it is not easy to be consistently grateful in all things in the trials of life. Sickness, disappointment, and the loss of people we love come at times in our lives. Our sorrows can make it hard to see our blessings and to appreciate the blessings God has in store for us in the future.

It is a challenge to count our blessings because we have a tendency to take good things for granted. When we lose a roof over our heads, food to eat, or the warmth of friends and family, we realize how grateful we should have been when we had them.

Most of all, sometimes it is hard for us to be sufficiently grateful for the greatest gifts we receive: the birth of Jesus Christ, His Atonement, the promise of resurrection, the opportunity to enjoy eternal life with our families, the Restoration of the gospel with the

priesthood and its keys. Only with the help of the Holy Ghost can we begin to feel what those blessings mean for us and for those we love. And only then can we hope to be thankful in all things and avoid the offense to God of ingratitude.

We must ask in prayer that God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, will help us see our blessings clearly even in the midst of our trials. He can help us by the power of the Spirit to recognize and be grateful for blessings we take for granted. What has helped me the most is to ask God in prayer, "Wouldst Thou please direct me to someone I can help for Thee?" It is in helping God bless others that I have seen my own blessings more closely.

My prayer was once answered when a couple I had not known before invited me to go to a hospital. There I found a little baby so small that she could fit in my hand. In only a few weeks of life, she had undergone multiple surgeries. The doctors had told the parents that more difficult surgery would be needed for the heart and lungs to sustain life in that little child of God.

At the request of the parents, I gave the baby a priesthood blessing. The blessing included a promise of life being extended. More than giving a blessing, I received the blessing myself of a more grateful heart.

With our Father's help, all of us can choose to feel more gratitude. We can ask Him to help us see our

blessings more clearly, whatever our circumstances. For me that day, I appreciated as never before the miracle of my own heart and lungs working. I gave thanks on the way home for blessings to my children that I could see more clearly were miracles of kindness from God and from good people around them.

Most of all, I felt gratitude for the evidence of the Atonement working in the lives of those anxious parents and in mine. I had seen hope and the pure love of Christ shining in their faces, even in their terrible trial. And I felt the evidence you can feel if you ask God to reveal to you that the Atonement can allow you to feel hope and love.

We all can make the choice to give thanks in prayer and to ask God for direction to serve others for Him—especially during this time of year when we celebrate the Savior's birth. God the Father gave His Son, and Jesus Christ gave us the Atonement, the greatest of all gifts and all giving (see D&C 14:7).

Giving thanks in prayer can allow us to see the magnitude of these blessings and all of our other blessings and so receive the gift of a more grateful heart.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Writing down our experiences and blessings can help us remember them and give us something to refer back to. Consider asking those you teach to write down what they are grateful for—to help them remember the

blessings they have received, recognize the blessings of the present, and look forward to the blessings of the future.

You could also encourage those you teach to follow President Eyring's example in asking Heavenly Father to direct them to someone they can help or serve.

YOUTH

Take a Gratitude Challenge

By John Hilton III and Anthony Sweat

Let's not just talk about counting our blessings—let's do it! Write a list of 100 things you are thankful for. If that sounds like it is too many, try this:

1. Write 10 physical abilities you are grateful for.
2. Write 10 material possessions you are grateful for.
3. Write 10 living people you are grateful for.
4. Write 10 deceased people you are grateful for.
5. Write 10 things about nature you are grateful for.
6. Write 10 things about today you are grateful for.
7. Write 10 places on earth you are grateful for.
8. Write 10 modern inventions you are grateful for.
9. Write 10 foods you are grateful for.
10. Write 10 things about the gospel you are grateful for.

When we make a list like this, we discover that a list of 100 doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of all the things God has given us.



Faith • Family • Relief

An Extensive Sphere of Action

Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

The Lord, His Church, families, and communities need the influence of righteous women. In fact, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “every sister in this Church who has made covenants with the Lord has a divine mandate to help save souls, to lead the women of the world, to strengthen the homes of Zion, and to build the kingdom of God.”¹

Some sisters may wonder if they can accomplish such lofty aims. But as Eliza R. Snow (1804–87), second Relief Society general president, explained, “There is no sister so isolated, and her sphere so narrow but what she can do a great deal towards establishing the Kingdom of God upon the earth.”² Sister Snow also taught that Relief Society was organized “for the accomplishment of every good and noble work.”³

Participation in Relief Society enlarges our spheres of influence by giving each sister opportunities to build faith, to strengthen families and homes, and to provide service both at home and throughout the world. And fortunately, our efforts as individuals and as Relief

Societies need not be large and overwhelming, but they should be deliberate and consistent. Righteous practices such as daily personal and family prayer, daily scripture study, and consistently magnifying Church callings will help increase faith and build the Lord’s kingdom.

To sisters who wonder if these seemingly quiet contributions make a difference, Elder Ballard affirms: “Every sister who stands for truth and righteousness diminishes the influence of evil. Every sister who strengthens and protects her family is doing the work of God. Every sister who lives as a woman of God becomes a beacon for others to follow and plants seeds of righteous influence that will be harvested for decades to come.”⁴

From Our History

Eliza R. Snow, who had served as secretary when Relief Society was organized in Nauvoo, was called by President Brigham Young (1801–77) to travel throughout the Church, helping bishops organize Relief Society in their wards.

Sister Snow taught: “If any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are

feeling in the least circumscribed [limited] in their present spheres, they will now find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed. . . . President Young has turned the key to a wide and extensive sphere of action and usefulness.”⁵

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Women of Righteousness,” *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 39.
2. Eliza R. Snow, “An Address,” *Woman’s Exponent*, Sept. 15, 1873, 62.
3. Eliza R. Snow, “Female Relief Society,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 22, 1868, 81.
4. M. Russell Ballard, *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 39.
5. Eliza R. Snow, *Deseret News*, Apr. 22, 1868, 81.

From the Scriptures

1 Corinthians 12:4–18;
1 Timothy 6:18–19; Mosiah 4:27;
Articles of Faith 1:13

What Can I Do?

1. How can I help the sisters I visit recognize and act on their ability to be a righteous influence?
2. How can I use my unique gifts and talents to bless others?

For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.