

## Episode 9

### Stories from General Relief Society Meetings

#### PRAYER/PRIESTHOOD

**NARRATOR:** When God our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820, the door opened to new revelation and modern prophets. However, God also gives each of us the ability to individually receive his guidance.

**Today on Stories from General Relief Society meetings we will be sharing stories about receiving blessings from Heavenly Father through prayer and priesthood power. We'll start with Sister Virginia U. Jensen from the October 2001 General Relief Society meeting as she shares an account about Lucy Mack Smith and her search for answers.**

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

Lucy Mack Smith, mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, recorded in her history that in the spring of 1803 she and her husband were much concerned about religion. She writes of her own search for truth, "I retired to a grove not far distant, where I prayed to the Lord . . . that the true gospel might be presented" (*History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley [1958], 43). Does that sound familiar?

Seventeen years later, in the spring of 1820, the Prophet Joseph Smith, in search of truth, "came to the determination to 'ask of God.'" So "I retired to the woods to make the attempt" (JS—H 1:13–14).

Is it a coincidence that both mother and son chose a grove of trees as the place to ask God to reveal truth to them? Joseph's prayer blessed the entire world through the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The righteous example set by a woman who stands firm in faith blesses countless others.

**NARRATOR:** Before the church could be organized, Heavenly Father gave Joseph Smith authority called the priesthood. Today, worthy male members use that same priesthood to direct the church. From the 2001 General Relief Society meeting, Sister Kathleen H. Hughes explains how the Relief Society was organized under the same pattern as the priesthood.

(Kathleen H. Hughes, October 2003 General Relief Society Meeting)

When Joseph Smith read the first bylaws written by Eliza R. Snow, he said the document was the best he had ever seen, but he envisioned "something better." He would "organize the women under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood." When the Prophet Joseph "turned the key" and established the "Female Relief Society of Nauvoo," he said that the Church itself had not been fully organized until that moment. Sisters, it's important that we understand that statement. Relief Society was established by God, through a prophet, by the power of priesthood authority; its existence is a necessary part of the organization of the Church. Men and women stand together in priesthood and Relief Society as we strive to bring families to Christ. As women, we should never think that our role in the Church is a lesser role than that played by men. Just as we as righteous women honor the priesthood, we need to hold sacred our calling as women as well.

**NARRATOR:** In the 1999 General Relief Society Meeting Sister Sheri L. Dew tells us how receiving a priesthood blessing comforted her before a trip.

(Sheri L. Dew, October 1999 General Relief Society Meeting)

Recently a professional assignment required me to travel out of the country. But I felt such a foreboding about the trip that prior to leaving I sought a priesthood blessing. I was warned that the adversary would attempt to thwart my mission and that physical and spiritual danger lay ahead. I was also counseled that this was not to be a sight-seeing or a shopping trip and that if I would focus on my assignments and seek the direction of the Spirit, I would return safely home.

Well, the warning was sobering. But as I proceeded, pleading for direction and protection each step of the way, I realized that my experience wasn't all that unique. Might not our Father have said to you and to me as we left His presence: "The adversary will attempt to thwart your mission, and you will face spiritual and physical danger. But if you will focus on your assignments, if you will heed my voice, and if you will refuse to reduce mortality to a sight-seeing or a shopping trip, you will return safely home".

**NARRATOR: Anyone seeking special counsel, comfort or healing can request a priesthood blessing. Modern prophets have counseled that men of the church should always be worthy to perform such a blessing.**

**From the 1999 General Relief Society meeting, President James E. Faust now shares a story about a girl who received comfort from a priesthood blessing provided by her father.**

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

One young woman became much more aware of the wonderful relationship we have to our Heavenly Father when she left home for the first time to go to college. Her father gave her a blessing and expressed his love. Then she writes:

"I clung to his words of love and support as I said a painful good-bye to my family. I felt alone and scared in those uncharted waters. Before I left the apartment that morning, I knelt down to ask for help. Desperately I pleaded with my Heavenly Father for strength to be able to face the college world all alone. I had left my family and friends and everything familiar the day before, and I knew I needed His help.

"My prayers were answered as I reflected on the tender experience with my father the day before. A wave of comfort fell over me as I realized that I had not come to college with the blessing of just my earthly father. I suddenly felt that one day, not so long ago, my Heavenly Father had held me close in His arms. Perhaps He gave me words of advice and encouragement and told me that He believed in me, just as my earthly father had. And at that moment, I knew that I am never without the perfect love and endless support of my Father in Heaven."

**NARRATOR: You're listening to "Stories from General Relief Society Meetings". We're sharing stories about receiving blessings and guidance from our heavenly father through prayer and priesthood blessings, both of which are available to anyone.**

**When a member of the church feels they are ready and living worthily, they may receive a special priesthood blessing called a "patriarchal blessing". These blessings provide personal instructions from god through one designated to provide such blessings. Such blessings may contain promises, blessings and warnings to guide us.**

**In the 2006 General Relief Society Meeting, Sister Bonnie D. Parkin tells about she and her mother receiving their patriarchal blessings together.**

(Bonnie D. Parkin, October 2006, General Relief Society Meeting)

My mother and I received our patriarchal blessings together. I was 20, and Mother was 49. I will never forget that day—how the patriarch placed his hands on Mother's head and told her how often her life had been spared through bouts of rheumatic fever, heart disease, and many other illnesses. He recounted her life, enumerating the times she had blessed others. He told her of things the Lord had in store for her and offered guidance as to what she needed to do. I knew my mother's life, and I listened as this patriarch, who was not acquainted with her, described her life. This experience was a witness to me that God lives, that He loves us, and that He knows us individually. I felt the Lord's love for my mother—and for me—on that memorable day.

**NARRATOR: In addition to special patriarchal blessings, we can seek help with our daily lives constantly as we listen to the guidance of the spirit.**

**Next, President Monson tells of a time when obeying the promptings of the spirit resulted in a wonderful blessing to a young girl and her family. This is from the 2007 General Relief Society Meeting.**

(President Monson, October 2007, General Relief Society Meeting)

Some years ago, just before leaving Salt Lake to attend the annual meetings of Boy Scouts of America in Atlanta, Georgia, I decided to take with me enough copies of the *New Era* so that I might share with Scouting officials this excellent publication. When I arrived at the hotel in Atlanta, I opened the package of magazines. I found that my secretary, for no accountable reason, had put in the package two extra copies of the June issue, an issue that featured temple marriage. I left the two copies in the hotel room and, as planned, distributed the other copies.

On the final day of meetings, I had no desire to attend the scheduled luncheon but felt compelled to return to my room. The telephone was ringing as I entered. The caller was a member of the Church who had heard I was in Atlanta. She introduced herself and asked if I could provide a blessing for her 10-year-old daughter. I agreed readily, and she indicated that she and her husband, their daughter, and their son would come immediately to my hotel room. As I waited, I prayed for help. The applause of the convention was replaced by the feelings of peace which accompanied prayer.

Then came the knock at the door and the privilege which was mine to meet a choice family. The 10-year-old daughter walked with the aid of crutches. Cancer had required the amputation of her left leg; however, her countenance was radiant, her trust in God unwavering. A blessing was provided. Mother and son knelt by the side of the bed while the father and I placed our hands on the tiny daughter. We were directed by the Spirit of God. We were humbled by its power.

I felt the tears course down my cheeks and tumble upon my hands as they rested on the head of that beautiful child of God. I spoke of eternal ordinances and family exaltation. The Lord prompted me to urge this family to enter the holy temple of God. At the conclusion of the blessing, I learned that such a temple visit was planned. Questions pertaining to the temple were asked. I heard no heavenly voice, nor did I see a vision. Yet there came clearly into my mind the words, "Refer to the *New Era*." I looked toward the dresser, and there were the two extra copies of the temple issue of the *New Era*. One copy was given to the daughter and the other to her parents. We reviewed them together.

The family said farewell, and once again the room was still. A prayer of gratitude came easily and, once more, the resolve to ever provide a place for prayer.

My dear sisters, do not pray for tasks equal to your abilities, but pray for abilities equal to your tasks. Then the performance of your tasks will be no miracle, but you will be the miracle.

**NARRATOR: From the Book of Mormon, we read about Alma whose righteousness allowed God to lighten his burdens: ...and it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the lord.”**

**The Lord hears our prayers. He may not always take away our trials, but he gives us strength to endure them as we submit to his will. In the 2003 General Relief Society Meeting, Sister Anne C. Pingree shares a story about a family who gained strength by relying on the lord through prayer.**

(Anne C. Pingree, October 2003 General Relief Society Meeting)

We are blessed with spiritual insights that can fortify our families. When Doug, the father of three small children, unexpectedly lost his job, unemployment benefits plus their small savings and some help from the extended family were the means of his family's support. His wife, Lori, tried to be positive as they both took odd jobs to help cover their expenses. They continued doing all the right things—praying, reading the scriptures, attending the temple, and paying tithing. Yet in spite of hundreds of résumés and many inquiries, job interviews were few, and no job offer was forthcoming.

One day after almost six months of job searching, Lori called her mother. Tearfully and with some anger in her voice, she said: "I don't think Heavenly Father is listening to us. I don't think I can pray anymore. It doesn't do any good."

During that telephone conversation, inspired words and thoughts came to Lori's mother as she bore her testimony and reminded her daughter of things she already knew: "Lori, you know better. You know that Heavenly Father loves you and is aware of your needs. But sometimes you have to wait. Perhaps this is your refiner's fire. I don't know. But what I do know is this: You need to go into your bedroom right now and kneel and pray, asking the Lord to comfort you and give you peace. Doug *will* find a job, but it may take a while longer. Remember all who love you and who are praying for you and who are helping you. You are very blessed."

What Lori realized was that when she knelt down and prayed—because she was focused on the Lord—she redirected her thoughts. She brought the Savior's love into her own life and into her home.

**NARRATOR: In the same 2003 meeting, President Gordon B. Hinckley tells the story of a man he met who also had his burdens lifted as he relied on the lord.**

(President Gordon B. Hinckley, October 2003 General Relief Society Meeting)

I remember going to a stake conference in the East many years ago. On the plane coming home, I felt that I had been a total failure. I felt I had not touched anyone for good. I was miserable with a sense of inadequacy.

Then, some years later, I was at another conference in California. At the conclusion of the meeting a man came up to me and said, "You were at a conference a few years ago in such-and-such a place."

"Yes," I said, "I was there, and I remember the occasion."

The man said: "You touched my heart. I came to that meeting out of curiosity. I really had no interest. I was on the verge of leaving the Church. But when it was announced that one of the Twelve Apostles would be there, I decided to go.

"You said something that started me to think. It touched me and stayed with me and stirred me. I decided to alter my course. I turned my life around. I am now living here in California. I have a good job, for which I am grateful. I hope I am a good husband and father. And I am now serving as a counselor in the bishopric of my ward. I am happier than I have ever been at any time in my life."

I thanked him, and when I left him I said to myself, shaking my head: "You never know. You never know whether you do any good. You never know how much good you do."

Now, my dear sisters, that is the way with you. You are doing the best you can, and that best results in good to yourself and to others. Do not nag yourself with a sense of failure. Get on your knees and ask for the blessings of the Lord; then stand on your feet and do what you are asked to do. Then leave the matter in the hands of the Lord. You will discover that you have accomplished something beyond price.

**NARRATOR: From the 2007 General Relief Society Meeting, President Monson shares a letter from a mother, who like President Hinckley, had discovered the influence she had in someone's life. Her prayers not only eased her burdens, but set an example to her children.**

(President Monson, October 2007, General Relief Society Meeting)

We can teach the importance of prayer to our children and grandchildren both by word and by example. I share with you a lesson in teaching by example as described in a mother's letter to me relating to prayer. "Dear President Monson: Sometimes I wonder if I make a difference in my children's lives. Especially as a single mother working two jobs to make ends meet, I sometimes come home to confusion, but I never give up hope."

Her letter continues as she describes how she and her children were watching general conference, where I was speaking about prayer. Her son made the comment, "Mother, you've already taught us that." She asked, "What do you mean?" Her son replied, "Well, you've taught us to pray and showed us how, but the other night I came to your room to ask something and found you on your knees praying to Heavenly Father. If He's important to you, He'll be important to me." The letter concluded, "I guess you never know what kind of influence you'll be until a child observes you doing yourself what you have tried to teach him to do."

**NARRATOR: In the last story, from the 1997 General Relief Society Meeting, we learn about the power of prayer as Sister Mary Ellen W. Smoot shares the miracle that happened following a mother's sincere prayer.**

(Mary Ellen Smoot, October 1997 General Relief Society Meeting)

May I share with you a story of a woman whose life demonstrated trials, promises, and dedication to Relief Society.

Years ago, a faithful father and mother were traveling with three of their six daughters from Utah to Washington. About 13 miles out of Baker, Oregon, the car spun out of control, left the road, and rolled two and a half times. The second time it rolled over, the mother, who was driving, and her youngest daughter, who was 10 years old, were thrown from the car. Because the car did not have enough momentum to complete the third

roll, it rocked back and pinned the mother and her daughter beneath its weight. The father quickly surveyed the situation and, knowing that if the car was not moved quickly his wife would die, he bowed his head in humble prayer and then proceeded to lift the huge Buick, with its wheels still spinning. The youngest daughter crawled from beneath as his 12-year-old daughter pulled her mother from beneath the car. The mother was critically injured and in terrible pain. As the father tended to the others, the 12-year-old daughter knelt beside her mother to comfort her. The mother reached for the girl's hand and said, "Always remember who you are, and always be a good girl."

The ambulance soon arrived, and the mother was whisked off to the nearest hospital. Amid the critical moments of that evening as the mother teetered between life and death, she pled with her Father in Heaven to spare her life long enough to see her six daughters married to worthy men in the house of the Lord. She promised that if He would grant her this righteous desire, she would then be ready to go, and she would dedicate her life to Him.

Miraculously, the woman steadily progressed over the days and weeks that followed until she fully recovered from her near-fatal injuries. More committed than ever, she faithfully served the Lord and focused her attention on raising her six daughters in righteousness.

Years later, while serving as the stake Relief Society president in Clearfield, Utah, she saw her youngest daughter married for time and all eternity. That day was the fulfillment of a sacred covenant between a beloved daughter of God and her loving Heavenly Father. The woman, her husband, their six daughters, and their eternal companions stood together in the house of the Lord. Her earnest plea from a hospital bed years before had been heard and fulfilled.

From that day forward, the woman's health quickly declined under the ravages of cancer. Her condition worsened to the point that she could no longer continue in her calling as stake Relief Society president. As a result, she reluctantly accepted a release just weeks before she serenely and gratefully passed into the eternities, returning to a Heavenly Father who was mindful of her.

Sisters, that 12-year-old girl who knelt at the roadside beside her mother so many years ago, stands before you as a witness that:

"Your every need shall be fulfilled, now, and in the eternities; every neglect will be erased; every abuse will be corrected. All of this can come to you, and come quickly, when you devote yourself to Relief Society."

**NARRATOR: The power of the priesthood and prayer can both be powerful sources of strength and guidance for our lives. Thank you for joining us on the Mormon Channel from the Conference Center in Salt Lake City. This has been "Stories from the General Relief Society Meeting" on the topic of prayer and priesthood power. For more information go to [radio.lds.org](http://radio.lds.org). Tell your friends about us!**