

Episode 11

Stories from General Young Women Meetings

FAMILY

NARRATOR: Welcome to “Stories from the General Young Women Meetings”. Today’s collection is on the topic of families.

(Elaine S. Dalton, April 2003 General Young Women Meeting)

On a pier in Copenhagen, Denmark, is a bronze statue of a young woman named Kristina. Kristina stands looking out to sea toward her goal to join the Saints in Zion. The wind is blowing against her fiercely, but she does not look back. She is steadfast as she presses forward doing a very hard thing, but one she knows to be right. I love that statue, for to me Kristina represents my own Danish great-great-grandmother who chose to join the Church amid great resistance. I am grateful for her courage and testimony. On her choice that day rested not only my eternal destiny but also the destiny of generations.

NARRATOR: That was Sister Elaine S. Dalton from the 2003 General Young Women Meeting. Our families extend back to our ancestors as well as ahead to posterity. Families are an essential part of God’s plan of happiness for us.

The popular hymn “Families Can Be Together Forever” says it perfectly: “I have a family here on earth. They are so good to me. I want to share my life with them through all eternity. Families can be together forever through Heavenly Father’s plan. I always want to be with my own family, and the Lord has shown me how I can.” Sister Julie B. Beck tells us how grateful she was for her mother’s teachings about creating an eternal family. This is from the 2003 General Young Women Meeting.

(Julie B. Beck, April 2003 General Young Women Meeting)

I have been blessed to have a mother who has spent her life preparing to meet God. She understands the principles of creating, learning, and serving in this life. Her motto has been “Welcome the task that makes you go beyond yourself, and you will grow.” Let me tell you a few highlights from her adventure-filled life. In her youth she lived in the wild Uinta Mountains, where her father worked. She learned to cut tall trees, fish, and camp in the outdoors. During the winter she attended school in the city, played on a basketball team, and learned to play the trumpet. She went to the university and became a nurse. After she was married, she went on a mission with her husband to Brazil, where she learned to speak Portuguese. She has traveled to many countries and has taught the gospel to thousands. She studies the scriptures daily, has written several family history books, works in the temple, keeps track of 62 grandchildren, and can cook 600 doughnuts in one morning!

My mother has stayed in the Savior's path with unshaken faith in Him (see 2 Nephi 31:19) all the days of her life. She wakes up every day looking forward to new adventures. For her, life is so interesting, and she still has so much to learn.

Because you have a Savior, you also believe in a happy, eternal life of creating, serving, and learning. You are already in the strait and narrow path, and there is hope smiling brightly before you.

NARRATOR:

A church manual, *Preach My Gospel*, provides training on sharing the gospel message with others. The following is a quote from its pages: "Because families are ordained of God, they are the most important social unit in time and in eternity. God has established families to bring happiness to his children, allow them to learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and prepare them for eternal life. The home is the best place to teach, learn, and apply principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A home established on gospel principles will be a place of refuge and safety. It will be a place where the spirit of the Lord can abide, blessing family members with peace, joy, and happiness." This is a good summary of the purpose of families. In the 2009 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Ann M. Dibb tells how early preparation can provide a solid foundation to guide a future family.

(Ann M. Dibb, April 2009, General Young Women Meeting)

Thinking back to when I was a young woman, I recognize that I did not understand the magnitude of what was happening in my life. I did not realize that my participation in each and every Church activity was helping me develop a lifelong pattern and commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. I didn't understand that I was being prepared for my future life as an individual, a wife, a mother, and a leader. I didn't understand that as I tried to choose the right, I was honoring my baptismal covenants, exercising faith, increasing my virtue, and preparing to go to the temple. I couldn't see all of this then, but in very small, incremental steps, I was becoming a believer—and "an example of the believers."

Although we didn't have the Personal Progress program as you have it today, we did have a very similar program. It included opportunities to learn, practice, and report our progress in living gospel principles. Recently I had the chance to reflect on my experiences when my friend and example, Sister Kathy Andersen, showed me her *Beehive Girl's Handbook*. I'd like to share with you some items from Sister Andersen's well-worn book:

In the area of "Love Truth," you were to:

"1. Be courteous and responsive in class. "2. Be honest in all that you do. It is important to gain knowledge in school, but it is also important to have honor and integrity and not be guilty of cheating. If you 'pass' classes and 'fail' character by being dishonest you have not learned the meaning of truth. "3. Do not gossip or listen to any gossip this month. Try to make this a habit for the rest of your life. "4. Notice the many nice things about members of your family and friends and tell them truthfully and sincerely what you

have observed. They will like you better. Remember—no ‘apple polishing or flattering’ (“*Beehive Girl’s Handbook* [1967–68], 59).

Even though what I’ve just read may seem old-fashioned, it contains truth. Young women “believers” must be courteous, be honest, speak kindly, and be sincere. These things may seem small and simple, but the Book of Mormon prophet Alma teaches, “Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise” (Alma 37:6).

Recently I have been following our living prophets by working on the new Young Women Personal Progress value, virtue. While that may seem like a *small and simple* thing, I testify that value experience number 3 has already had a *great* impact in my life. The experience requires study of Alma chapter 5; it then asks you to make a list of what you will do to prepare yourself to enter the temple and receive the blessings Heavenly Father has promised. (See *Young Women Personal Progress* [insert, 2009], 3.)

As I studied Alma’s words, I was humbled by the many things that I must do to be numbered in the Good Shepherd’s flock. The list I recorded in my journal includes:

“I must choose to be spiritually born of God and have His image in my countenance [see v. 14]. “I must choose to exercise faith in the redemption of Him who created me [see v. 15]. “I must choose to come out from among the wicked and be separate [see v. 57]. “I must choose to be stripped of pride and be sufficiently humble and walk blameless before God [see vv. 27–28]. “I must choose to change, repent, and accept the Lord’s invitation to come unto Him and partake of the fruit of the tree of life [see v. 34].”

In my journal I committed to do the following. Now, granted, some of them reflect my individual challenges: “Read my scriptures with greater personal application. “Be positive. Don’t whine. “Show respect and refuse to mock others. “Express gratitude, especially to those closest to me. “Be more orderly to invite the Spirit in my home and life. “Repent, increase my humility, and consider the spiritual condition of my heart. “Translating Alma’s words for me, *I will change*. I will choose to increase my commitment to be ‘an example of the believers.’ “

Because I participated in this “small and simple” Personal Progress activity, my testimony of prophets and my commitment to follow Jesus Christ greatly increased. Completing this goal prepared me to be more receptive to the Spirit the next time I attended church and the temple. Each time I review the words I wrote in my journal, I feel the Spirit and remember what I felt when I did this experience at my kitchen table. Alma chapter 5 is now one of my favorite chapters. Truly, I received many blessings as I did this, *my* Personal Progress experience.

I mentioned Sister Andersen and her *Beehive Girl’s Handbook*. She is the wife of Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy, a mother, and a grandmother. I love the thought that even though she has moved so many times, she has always known where to find her *Beehive Girl’s Handbook* and achievement bandlo. Sister Andersen has stood

by her husband and taught the gospel all over the world. She has also exemplified womanhood and goodness as a faithful member of the Church.

As an 11-year-old girl, Sister Andersen couldn't wait to enter the Young Women program. When her birthday finally arrived, she was given the *Beehive Girl's Handbook*. Sister Andersen explains:

“In the beginning of the book it said, ‘As a Beehive girl, and for the rest of your life, set your goals high’ (*Beehive Girl's Handbook*, 12). I could tell this was going to be a great adventure for me. I took my book home and immediately read it from cover to cover to see what goals I should complete during the next two years.

“I discovered that there were 80 possible goals to choose from. In my excitement, I determined that if I worked hard, I could complete all of the goals in my book—well, all except one: to go to the temple . . . and be baptized for the dead (*Beehive Girl's Handbook*, 140). I [could not] be baptized for the dead because there [was] no temple in Florida.”

Sister Andersen decided to tell her father about her situation. Her letter continues:

“My father hesitated only a moment. We had no family in the West and no other reason to travel to Utah. He thoughtfully said to me, ‘Kathy, if you [will] complete *all* of the other goals in your Beehive book, we will take you the 2,500 miles [4,000 km] to the temple in Salt Lake City so that you can do baptisms for the dead and complete your final goal.’

“I worked on the goals in my Beehive book for two years and completed 79 goals. My father worked during those two years to save enough money to make the journey to the temple. My father kept his promise to me.

“Air travel at that time was too expensive for our family, and so we traveled 5,000 miles [8,000 km] by car to Salt Lake City and back so that I could complete my last Beehive goal. What joy I felt as I entered the Salt Lake Temple and in proxy was baptized by my father. It was an experience I will never forget.

“I will forever be appreciative for my mother and father's willingness to make the temple an important part of my life. . . . They wisely understood that as I worked on my Young Women goals, my faith would be strengthened. My parents' faith and sacrifice in making the long journey to Salt Lake City significantly impacted me and the generations that have followed” (“I Can Complete All of the Goals—Except One,” unpublished manuscript).

As a young girl, Sister Andersen strove to do the small and simple things that would help her become an exemplary woman—“an example of the believers”—and that is what she has become. (11:18)

NARRATOR:

You're listening to Stories from the General Young Women Meetings here on the Mormon Channel. The topic is families. In the 1997 General Young Women meeting, President Thomas S. Monson shares a tender story of family unity and love.

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

Some years ago Ruth Fawson, mother of six, underwent life-threatening surgery. Her devoted husband and her three sons and three daughters were all at the hospital. The physicians and nurses explained to the family that they could return to their homes and that the staff was prepared to care adequately for Sister Fawson. The family expressed their thanks to the hospital staff but indicated a determination for at least one of its number to be present at all times. A daughter expressed the feelings of all: "We wanted to be there when Mother awakened and stretched forth her hand, so that it would be our hands she would grasp, it would be our smiles she would see, it would be our words she would hear, it would be our love she would feel." "Honour thy father and thy mother."

NARRATOR:

Honoring our father and mother is a commandment. A benefit of living this commandment is that we learn so much ourselves! In the 2007 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Elaine S. Dalton tells how she learned from the examples of other women in her family.

(Elaine S. Dalton, April 2007, General Young Women Meeting)

I have in my office the pictures of the generations of women in my family—my great-grandmother, my grandmother, my mother, and my daughter, Emi. Their lives of commitment and faith in the plan have helped me climb higher and journey further. Looking at that picture now, I can see very clearly the importance of living a virtuous life. Today I not only have one daughter, but five daughters-in-law and five little granddaughters to add to that picture. I feel a deep sense of responsibility to live an exemplary life of virtue and holiness before them. Even if you are the first in the line of generations to come, you too have a responsibility to those that will follow you.

Recently, I embarked on that same hike in the Tetons I spoke of earlier, only this time with my husband and a group of friends our same age. When we started, it was thrilling and easy, but before we arrived at our destination, we were exhausted and I knew I was in trouble. I was not as prepared for the hike physically as I had been when I hiked with the young women years before—and I had packed my equipment carelessly and taken too much. The weight of my pack began to make me weary and ready to give up. The others were also feeling the rigors of the altitude, the steep terrain, and heavy packs. My husband sensed this and hurried ahead. I felt abandoned. However, after about an hour I could see my husband descending the trail on the other side of the valley. He was running toward me. When he reached me, he took my pack, dried my tears, and led me to the destination—a crystal clear lake surrounded by lofty pine trees. Then he turned around, went back down the trail, and did the same thing four more times for the other hikers. As I watched him, I was sorry I was so unprepared and even more sorry that I had so many extra things in my pack that had added to the weight he had to carry for me. But I was so grateful for his strength, for his unselfishness, for his preparation, and for his love.

As you climb the mountains of life, stay on the path of virtue. There will be others to help you—your parents, family members, bishops, advisers, and righteous friends of all ages. And if you are weary or take a wrong turn, change your direction and get back on the path of virtue. Always remember that the Savior is there for you. He will enable you to

repent, strengthen you, lighten your burdens, dry your tears, comfort you, and continue to help you stay on the path.

NARRATOR: In the 2002 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Carol B. Thomas tells about a well-known mother in church history who prayed that her son would be protected in a dangerous situation.

(Carol B. Thomas, April 2002 General Young Women Meeting)

Listen to a wonderful story by the mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith about the night he went to get the gold plates. She writes: "[That night] I sat up very late. . . . About twelve o'clock Joseph came to me and asked me if I had a chest with a lock and key. . . . And not having one I was greatly alarmed. . . . But Joseph . . . said, 'Never mind, I can do very well . . . without it—be calm—all is right.' "

Shortly after Joseph and Emma left, taking a horse and wagon. Now listen to what his mother says: "I spent the night in prayer and supplication to God, for the anxiety of my mind would not permit me to sleep." The pleadings of a mother, a righteous daughter of God, comforted the Prophet and protected the gold plates. Over the years, her constant prayers helped strengthen her home and family (see Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley [1979], 102).

NARRATOR: A mother's love is unbounded! It takes a lot of learning and experience to be a good mother. In the 1998 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Sharon G. Larsen reads from a letter from a young woman who had to learn homemaking skills at a young age.

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

Listen to the example of a young woman who wrote: "Right now in my family we are going through a tough time. I have been given the opportunity to fill my mother's role. Sometimes I have to not participate in activities after school so I can care for my brother. Sometimes I have to not go out with my friends so that I can cook dinner or go grocery shopping." Then she adds, "Because of this responsibility, I have learned a great deal about being a mother, growing up and taking responsibility, not only for myself but for others."

NARRATOR: In the same meeting, Sister Carol B. Thomas tells of another young woman who had to learn the responsibilities of a mother at age 14.

(Carol B. Thomas, April 1998 General Young Women Meeting)

Sometimes young women have special challenges when the family isn't complete. Last summer in Alaska, I met a Young Women president whose mother had died when she was three. She had been raised by her father, joining the Church at age 14. I asked her how she had learned to do all the feminine things, like fixing her hair and setting a pretty table. She said: "I watched my Young Women leaders! When I saw one of them who knew how to cook, I thought, *I want to be just like her*. Now, every time I clean my house, I think of my Laurel adviser." So even if your own families are less than perfect, you can think about and plan for your own future family.

NARRATOR:

In the Book of Mormon, First Nephi chapter eight, we read about Lehi's dream. Lehi sees the tree of life with fruit that fill's ones soul with happiness. He says "As I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also..." Lehi's first thoughts were to benefit his family with the good thing he had discovered. We learn later that the fruit represents eternal life. Through worthy individual lives, families become united and can be an eternal unit. This has been an episode of Stories from the General Young Women Meetings. Tell your friends about the Mormon Channel. For more information go to radio.lds.org.