

*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mysteries of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:2-3)*

I would like you to think about a friend that you feel close to. What is it about your relationship that makes it so? Perhaps you have similar interests/hobbies. Or, you have similar beliefs/opinions. Or, you come from similar backgrounds etc. Also, what makes it hard to feel that with someone.

I think each one of us could find several people in this room that we could have a close relationship with according to these standards. I would now like us to think of it in a different way and set a different standard. Each one of us in this room are children of God sent here for the same purpose. To be tried and tested and prove ourselves worthy of the gift of eternal life. We are all women striving to live righteously, to be a positive influence for good within our sphere of influence and who hope to become all our Father in Heaven would have us become. In this we are united and we need each other to accomplish these things. Not one of us can do it on our own. We are connected in the most important ways. And, on this ground we can and should be knit together in love and unity.

The Prophet Joseph Smith often taught the Saints about unity. He said, "Unity is strength... Let the Saints of the Most High ever cultivate this principle, and the most glorious blessings must result, not only to them individually, but to the whole Church."

Our Heavenly Father wants our hearts to be knit together. This isn't just simply an ideal. It is a necessity and a commandment. As we seek for and cultivate this principle we will be blessed with this gift. The joy of unity He wants so much to give us is not solitary... we must seek it and qualify for it with others.

Said President Spencer W. Kimball: "We must remember that those mortals we meet in parking lots, offices, elevators, and elsewhere are that portion of mankind God has given us to love and to serve. It will do us little good to speak of the general brotherhood of mankind if we cannot regard those who are all around us as our brothers and sisters."

Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, spoke of that unity and how we will have our natures changed to make it possible. It was His last meeting with His Apostles before His death, before he faced the terrible sacrifice for all of us that would make eternal life possible. He prayed for His disciples, whom He had sent into the world to teach the gospel. He also prayed for those who would believe in Him because of His disciples' words. He pled for unity. We see in His words the way families, and all children of our Heavenly Father who follow the Savior and His servants will be made one.

Read John 17:18-21

I quote President Eyring, "In those few words He made clear how the gospel of Jesus Christ can allow hearts to be made one. Those who would believe the truth He taught could accept the ordinances and the covenants offered by His authorized servants. Then, through obedience to those ordinances and covenants, their natures would be changed. The Savior's Atonement in that way makes it possible for us to be sanctified. We can then live in unity, as we must to have peace in this life and to dwell with the Father and His Son in eternity." ("That We May Be One" April General Conference, 1998).

By the power of the restored Priesthood we can make covenants which allow us to have the Holy Ghost with us as a constant companion. The sacramental prayers remind us every week of how the gift of

unity will come through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we keep our covenants to take His name upon us, to remember Him always, and to keep all His commandments, we will receive the companionship of His Spirit. Again, I quote President Eyring, “Where people have that Spirit with them, we may expect harmony. The Spirit puts the testimony of truth in our hearts, which unifies those who share that testimony. The Spirit of God never generates contention. It never generates the feelings of distinctions between people which lead to strife. It leads to personal peace and a feeling of union with others. It unifies souls. A unified family, a unified Church, and a world at peace depend on unified souls.”

In addition to ordinances there are principles we can follow that lead to greater unity.

\*Revelation – revelation is the only way we can know how to follow the will of the Lord together. The Holy Ghost will testify to our hearts, and the hearts of those gathered around with us, what He would have us do.

\*Humility – Being a peacemaker that can calm troubled waters before harm is done. Search for anything you can agree on. Find the truths that you share, which is greater than any differences you may have. Heavenly Father will inspire and guide us in this as we seek for His help. The children of God have more in common than they have differences and even those differences can be seen as an opportunity, or a contribution and may be the very thing we need to better serve our Heavenly Father. Be humble. Pride is the great enemy of unity.

\*Another principle is to speak well of each other and of our leaders. We must see the good in each other whenever we can. We must also stand against those who speak contemptuously of sacred things.

\*We must forgive and bear no malice towards those who offend us. The Savior set the example from the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” A favorite hymn of mine is “Lord, I Would Follow Thee.” The second verse always causes me to ponder... “Who am I to judge another when I walk imperfectly? In the quiet heart is hidden sorrow that the eye can't see.” We do not know the hearts of those who offend us, or do us wrong.

The Apostle Paul teaches us how to love in a world of imperfect people, including ourselves, when he said, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Cor. 14:4-5).

\*We can also be unified with each other by serving together, teaching one another, and encouraging one another.

Sisters, we are all spirit children of our Heavenly Father. We are indeed sisters. As we remember this important truth our desires to be unified, to love, serve, and lift one another will increase and we will be blessed to know how to do this as we see that blessing. We are given opportunities every day to show love and kindness to those around us.

In this last General Conference President Monson spoke on love being the essence of the Gospel. In his talk he said, “Love is expressed in many recognizable ways; a smile, a wave, a kind comment, a compliment. Other expressions may be more subtle, such as showing interest in another's activities, teaching a principle with kindness and patience, visiting one who is ill or homebound. These words and actions and many others can communicate love. Dale Carnegie, a well-known American author and

lecturer, believed that each person has within himself or herself the “power to increase the sum total of the world's happiness... by giving a few words of sincere appreciation to someone who is lonely or discouraged.” Said he, “Perhaps you will forget tomorrow the kind words you say today, but the recipient may cherish them over a lifetime.” (“Love – the Essence of the Gospel” April 2014 General Conference)

This brings to my mind an experience I had a few years ago that I would like to share with you. I had been shopping at Costco and had just finished loading my groceries in the trunk of the car. I had taken the cart back to the cart stall and was walking back to my car. As I was walking I noticed a man walking in the parking lot. I smiled at him and then continued to my car. Just as I was getting ready to back up I noticed this man at my window. I rolled down my window and the man said, “I just wanted to thank you for your smile.” Then, with tears in his eyes he said, “I recently lost my wife and I'm having a hard time. Your smile brightened my day. So, thank you!” As he walked away my heart was full of gratitude that I had been able to look up and see him. What I did took no effort on my part, but made a difference in his day. I have also been on the receiving end of others kindness. I have had hard days when a simple act from a stranger has lifted my spirits and been balm to my troubled heart.

I would like to leave with you the challenge that President Monson issued to us all in this last General Conference. “May we begin now, this very day, to express love to all of God's children, whether they be our family members, our friends, mere acquaintances, or total strangers. As we arise each morning, let us determine to respond with love and kindness to whatever might come our way.”

Sisters, I know that as we do this we will have powers of heaven with us and we will have joy. We will also be living as our Father in Heaven would have us live and we will receive blessings unmeasured. I know this is true.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.