

I like the idea of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party for our theme! And, I love the idea that we are all a little crazy AT TIMES, because I feel a little crazy MOST of the time....

So, obviously the theme for tonight comes from the beloved story, Alice in Wonderland, a classic story that we can take many lessons from. And, I hope that in the few minutes that I have tonight I will be able to convey a few thoughts that might help us grow closer as sisters and hopefully, help us do a little bit better as visiting teachers.

To start, I'd like to talk about Alice. She was a very proper little girl, brought up in the best of circumstances. But, when she fell into the rabbit hole, everything she ever knew to be true, and proper, and right was gone. Suddenly nothing seemed to make sense. Do you ever have days or maybe even weeks when you feel like you have fallen into a rabbit hole? Also, I thought about when we lived in the PRE-EXISTENCE. Everything was true and proper and right there... Then we came to this Wonderland called Earth....

Also, think about some of the characters that Alice met and some of the people you may know or have met. These characters range from funny, silly, serious, scary, rude, intelligent, and preoccupied, but all were a little crazy and exaggerated. However, two stand out to me. One is The Queen of Hearts. She is obviously the ruler of Wonderland and she strikes fear into everyone. Even though Alice knows the Queen is only a playing card, she still feels fear. But, when Alice finds out that she never really kills the characters she condemns to death, she realizes that the Queen's temper and rhetoric are far worse than her bite. It was only after Alice took the time to get to know the Queen that she was able to conquer her fear and move on. Do we have fears about visiting someone we don't know? I think Alice is a great example for us. We need to take the time to get to know our sisters.

And then there is my favorite, the Cheshire Cat. Now, he is the cool one! The one who maintains his outsider status. Yet, he is the one who has it ALL figured out. He has insight into the workings of Wonderland. He tells Alice, that to be in Wonderland is to be "mad". As she talks to him, Alice begins to see things that had not occurred to her before. And, when she asked the Cat, "Which way should I go?" The Cat replied, in his very cool manner, "That depends on where you want to go. If you do not know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which path you take."

Unlike Alice, we all know where we want to go. And, it DOES matter which path we take. By choosing our path, we choose our destination and destiny. However, we don't have to travel that path alone like Alice did. And we are **not** in this Wonderland, or this life alone. WE HAVE EACH OTHER.

I think, I can safely say that we have all chosen the straight and narrow path that leads to exaltation. I think, I can also safely say that staying on that path is not always easy. In fact, for some of us it has been a very rough and very, slippery path. Some of us have even lost our footing or our way at times.

This earth life is our Wonderland, where sometimes things happen beyond our control, where sometimes things just don't seem to make sense, where sometimes it is easy to be misled and lose our way...

Well, guess what, Heavenly Father has a great plan. And that plan includes what? -Visiting Teaching. We can each be the Cheshire cat and **more** to those we visit; offering insight, support, love, a shoulder to cry on, a hug, a listening ear, friendship, an outing, a spiritual thought, and maybe even a little advice. We can help each other stay on or get back on the right path.

When you received your calling to be a visiting teacher, you received that calling from Heavenly Father, just like any other calling. I know that a member of the bishopric doesn't extend the calling to us. But, our RS president does. And, when you receive your list of sisters to visit, remember that Heavenly Father chose those sisters for you to visit because **THEY** need you and **YOU** need them. Yes, visiting teaching works both ways! Some of my best friends are a direct result of visiting teaching.

And, don't be afraid to call or visit a sister you don't know. I have met some wonderful and very interesting sisters that I might never had known, if it hadn't been for a visiting teaching assignment. I have learned so much from so many beautiful, spiritual and knowledgeable sisters. Some of these sisters have been my friends for over 25 years....

And, may I also suggest, to go along with our efforts with visiting teaching, that in RS we all sit together, instead of scattered all over that big room. If you don't know a sister, even better! Sit next to her and make a new friend! Remember 1 Nephi 4:6 - "I was led by the spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do," and I'll add the things which I should say...

Sisters, there are some great sisters that are not here tonight because they feel unloved, unwanted, unneeded and have lost their way. Let's all get out of this Wonderland, this life together, by doing the work our Heavenly Father and our Savior have given us to do. Let's do the best we can to help each other, and let's make some new and everlasting friendships. Alice found her way and so can we!

I have a testimony of visiting teaching. It is part of Heavenly Father's plan to help us help each other. I'm grateful for the sisters that I have visited and the ones I visit now. And I'm grateful for all the wonderful visiting teachers I have had. And I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

--By Joan Sattler