

“Armed with Righteousness and with the Power of God in Great Glory”

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How grateful I am today for the blessing of family—for the love and support of my good husband, for my four daughters, my parents who are also here, sisters, aunts, nieces, and dear friends who are just like sisters.

I even got a good luck e-mail last P Day from my son who is on a mission in Bangkok, Thailand! My family and friends are here from California to Connecticut, and even though I know the real reason is “any excuse for a girls trip,” I am truly buoyed up by each of you, and I love you.

And how’s this for support? Not only are the women with whom I work in Young Women’s in the Parley’s Stake all here for support, but I am told—I haven’t seen them yet, but I am told my own stake leaders, from my youth, are here from Arizona, those women who taught me everything I know about girls’ camp and more. And so I thank them, wherever you are in the crowd.

But all of you, what a sight you are and what power there is in this room right now. Can you feel the strength of all of you incredible women together in one place? Look around for just a second—feel it. When you go home and you have some days where you feel all alone, remember *this*.

Some of the most affirming moments in my own life have been right here in the Marriott Center. My very first was in the fall of 1979 as a brand-new freshman here on the BYU campus. (OK, I see you calculating.... Don’t bother with the math. YES, I turned 50 on my last birthday).

But I shall never forget that day in this very building when several thousand new freshmen all came together for a welcome devotional and we sang, “We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet.” The prophet was Spencer W. Kimball at the time, and I was sitting way up there at the top—somewhere where you sisters are.

It was at that very moment when the Spirit confirmed to me in no small way that President Kimball was indeed a true prophet of God and that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

During my years at BYU, I came many times to the Marriott Center for firesides and devotionals, right here. I was strengthened by the testimonies of university leaders, church leaders, and spouses of church leaders. I shall never forget Sister Camilla Kimball standing at this podium in 1980 at nearly 86 years of age. In her strong, rich, memorable voice, she told the students at BYU, and particularly the women, to acquire all the education that was possible, so that we would each be prepared for our life's work. That talk impacted me then and still resonates in my heart today.

I have felt the Spirit in rich abundance in this building at many sessions of BYU Women's Conference through the years, as I have stood next to you, shoulder to shoulder, singing hymns about the Savior, Jesus Christ, and about our sisterhood in Zion. Each time I come to Women's Conference and join with you in these sessions, I am imbued with your goodness, your charity and your strength. When this many covenant women of faith are all together in a single room, it is beyond description and words truly fail me.

Oh, and one more thing—did I mention that my husband brought me here to the Marriott Center on our very first date, a basketball game? I really do love this place.

“And they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”

As a young girl, maybe five or six years old, I had a pretty active imagination. More accurately, one might say I was a worrier. Often, when my parents would go out for the evening and leave us children in the care of a favorite babysitter, I worried that something would happen to them. I worried that my mother and father would never come home. I have vivid memories of lying in my bed and hearing a siren outside and being absolutely certain that it was coming to help my parents because they had gotten in a bad car accident and had to be rushed to the hospital. (I told you I was kind of a worrier).

Even though my parents returned home safely every single time, it didn't stop me from reliving this same scenario for many months. I remember the absolute terror that gripped my young heart. It was so real and so frightening to me that I dreaded my parents leaving, and I can still recall minute details and feelings about those nights in my bedroom so many years ago.

Well, like most of you, my good parents had taught me to pray when I was afraid. And every bit as vividly as I remember the fear that I felt, I remember what happened to me that first allowed me to experience comfort from a loving Heavenly Father who gave me an answer that I knew was directly from Him and meant specifically for me.

As I lay in my bed, consumed—almost paralyzed—with fear, I would be prompted to

pray. And within seconds, I would see a scene in my mind and feel an outpouring of love and warmth that would wash over me from my head to my toes and immediately calm me and take away my dread. The scene in my mind and feeling of comfort were identical every single time this occurred. And as this same experience was repeated, it became for me a personal message of peace from a loving Heavenly Father to a frightened little girl.

Well, the years went by, and I outgrew my irrational fear. Not every single siren I heard stopped me in my tracks. And although I could no longer relive the experience no matter how hard I tried to summon it back, the memory of it was seared in my heart. I *knew* with every part of me that there was power in prayer and that the Comforter is real! All of my life I have known that prayer strengthens us and draws us to God, and indeed arms us “with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”

I am humbled at the opportunity to present the theme of this conference. What a great and empowering theme for the women of the world! Now notice I didn’t just say the women of the LDS Church—you heard me right. We need the women of the *world* to be armed with righteousness and to influence those around them with the power of God in great glory. Sisters, the Lord needs *all* of us. And He is especially counting on you—you women who already have testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He needs us all and He needs us *now*.

This theme is part of a scripture found in the beginning chapters of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 14:14—“And they were armed with righteousness and the power of God in great glory.”

OK, let’s get some context here. Lehi, Sariah and their families have already left Jerusalem for the wilderness. The brothers have gone back to the city. After some failed attempts, some serious sibling rivalry, and some amazing spiritual experiences, the boys have finally secured the brass plates from Laban. Now the family of Ishmael has also joined Lehi’s family. Both Lehi and Nephi have seen the vision of the tree of life, and now, Nephi, who delights in righteousness and is extremely obedient, has asked in faith to see everything. And I mean *everything*.

In his vision, Nephi is blessed to see the Promised Land, the coming of the Savior to his people. Nephi sees the great apostasy and he sees the restoration of Jesus Christ’s church to the earth.

Nephi sees the building up of Zion, and he sees all of us in our day. Nephi, in this unspeakable vision, sees the destiny of the Kingdom of God. He even sees things he can’t tell us about. In chapter 14, verse 28 he says, “I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard . . . and I have written but a small part of the things which I saw.”

Nephi truly saw it all. One of the most salient parts of his vision gives us our theme for this conference. Nephi sees the church of the Lamb of God in these latter days. He sees that there are relatively few people who are living righteously and keeping their

covenants. Not only are they few in number, they're also scattered about the face of the earth. Contrast that to the vast majority of the people who, he writes, were choosing iniquity and breaking the commandments.

How do you suppose this small, scattered band of saints could stay strong against such a tidal wave of wickedness?

Well, Nephi tells us. "I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory" (1 Nephi 14:14).

That's how! God himself arms His covenant people with all the tools we need to stand steadfastly in our places and build the kingdom of God in our time. His protection is around us as we seek to follow His will for us and stand up boldly for His purposes. We may be relatively small in number and scattered around the world, but our influence for good can be significant when it is magnified by the "power of God in great glory."

Let me repeat that: We may be relatively small in number and scattered about the world, but our influence for good can be significant when it is magnified by the "power of God in great glory."

Like Sister Burton, I love this picture. The pioneer woman depicted on the program for this conference, painted by Minerva Teichert, has become almost iconic for us as Relief Society sisters.

There she stands, one hand on her handcart and the other raised in determination toward the Heavens, and perhaps toward us. Her fist pump is triumphant. We've said it before—she signals to us that "We women can do hard things!"

As I've looked at her—a lot, while preparing this talk—sometimes I think she's looking right back at me, reminding me that both she and I can be armed with God's power every day of our lives if we live up to our spiritual potential.

Our trials and our trails are different because of time and place, but our shared faith and commitment would bond us immediately, and we would stand together as we are today, as sisters in the cause of Christ.

This summer, the young men and women in our neighborhood are planning to participate, as you heard, in a pioneer trek reenactment as so many of you have done in your own communities. I have been blessed to help with the planning of this event.

As I have learned and read the individual stories of these incredible men and women who sacrificed literally everything, I have been moved again and again and again. The legacy of their faith is foundational in our church today. Their sacrifices echo through the generations and give us, in our day, examples to emulate of standing boldly in the face of

nearly every adversity imaginable. They share with us heroic personal narratives from which we can draw strength and hope during our most difficult days.

I daresay that most of my problems look like trail blisters in comparison to what they endured to walk west and build the Church in its early years.

I have always appreciated the pioneers on some level, and I am certainly grateful for my own pioneer heritage. But as I've become more immersed in stories that are new to me, and have read about experiences sometimes in their own words, people have really come alive to me—these mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children. I love them and I thank them. They too were small in number, but certainly armed with the power of God. One of many women I have come to love is Elizabeth Jackson. She, her husband Aaron, and their three young children were part of the Martin Handcart Company that trekked across the Great Plains in the late summer and fall of 1856.

They were at a point in their journey where food rations were scant, attacks from wolves or other wild beasts threatened their lives, and Aaron the husband had become very, very ill. After barely—barely—making it across the freezing Platte River, they were met on the other bank by a storm of snow, hail and wind.

Elizabeth had no choice but to lighten the load in that family handcart, so a good deal of her bedding and clothing had to be discarded.

Elizabeth's husband became sicker and sicker. One night he tried to eat, but failed. He was too weak to even swallow. So Elizabeth put her husband to bed and lay beside him. And these are her words:

“I was extremely cold. The weather was bitter. I listened to hear if my husband breathed—he lay so still. I could not hear him. I became alarmed. I put my hand on his body, when to my horror I discovered that my worst fears were confirmed. My husband was dead! He was cold and stiff—rigid in the arms of death. It was a bitter freezing night and the elements had sealed up his mortal frame. I called for help to the other inmates of the tent. They could render me no aid; and there was no alternative but to remain alone by the side of the corpse till morning. . . . Of course I could not sleep. I could only watch, wait, and pray for the dawn. But oh, how those weary hours drew their tedious length along. When daylight came, some of the . . . company prepared the body for burial. And oh, such a burial and funeral service. They did not remove his clothing—he had but little. They wrapped him in a blanket and placed him in a pile with thirteen others who had died, and then they covered him up in the snow. The ground was frozen so hard they could not dig a grave. He was left there to sleep in peace until the trump of the Lord shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall awake and come forth in the morning of the first resurrection. We shall then again unite our hearts and lives, and eternity will furnish us with life forever more.”

Elizabeth goes on to write about her utter devastation at being a widow with three small children, and about the horrible conditions that continued to plague this little company

until help from Salt Lake arrived. She did make it to the valley, and years later she concluded her writings with these words: "...the Lord has blessed me, and rewarded me with an abundance of the world's good, for all my sufferings, and has also blessed me with the highest blessings of a spiritual nature that can be conferred upon man or woman, in His holy temple . . . I have a happy home for which I thank my Father in Heaven."

After all she endured, Elizabeth ends her life with words of faith, gratitude, and testimony. Truly the examples of these incredible pioneer women of yesterday help arm us with God's power today.

Of course, our modern lives are certainly more comfortable, but make no mistake, sisters—there are pitfalls and perils around all of us every day and every night. And it will take every bit as much determination and action on our parts to be latter-day fist pumpers. But we too, can do hard things.

Through His prophets and the scriptures, the Lord has provided us numerous strategies, which we can employ in our own lives to ensure His protective power upon us and upon our loved ones. There are too many to list here today, but may I touch on just a few that have been powerful in my own experience.

For me, it begins with prayer. As I mentioned, I learned of its power as a young girl, but my testimony of prayer has grown stronger with each passing decade.

President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke of prayer's power to arm all of us: "How wonderful it is that you get on your knees . . . and pray in earnestness night and morning. . . . Prayer unlocks the powers of heaven in our behalf. Prayer is the great gift, which our Eternal Father has given us by which we may approach Him and speak with Him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be prayerful. You cannot make it alone. You cannot reach your potential alone. You need the help of the Lord" ("Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, August 1997).

It is also imperative that we arm ourselves each day by feasting upon the word of God. Don't let a day go by without serious study in the scriptures. I can testify that the more we read, the more we realize we need to read and the more we want to read. We can become like Nephi, whose soul delighted in the scriptures and whose heart pondered them.

Sisters, we know there is doctrine and history, and the gospel of Jesus Christ written in the scriptures, but today I want to testify to you, there are also answers—personal answers to *your* individual questions. The scriptures will lead us along and provide answers as we immerse ourselves in their holy words.

Service to others is also key, as we seek God's power in our lives. We are counseled to serve with no thought of recognition; serve others both in and out of the Church; serve with members of our faith and serve alongside members of other faiths. With so much suffering and tragedy all around the world, it will take the efforts of all good people

working together, who share a similar vision, to lift the downtrodden, help the needy, and succor God's children—our brothers and sisters.

We've also been counseled to acquire the skills and education that will allow us to serve in a variety of areas. From the earliest days of the Church, women have been encouraged to increase their learning and then use that knowledge to teach, influence and serve.

President Brigham Young said, "We believe that women are useful, not only to sweep houses, wipe dishes, make beds, and raise babies, but they should stand behind the counter, study law or physics, or become good bookkeepers and be able to do the business in any counting house, and all this to enlarge their sphere of usefulness for the benefit of society at large. In following these things they but answer the design of their creation" (*Journal of Discourses*, 13:61).

Sisters, serve willingly, wherever and to whatever capacity you are called. Last year at Women's Conference, I had the privilege of sharing a speaking session with former Utah Governor Olene Walker. Our assigned topic was "Magnifying Your Callings." While her talk (as you can well imagine) was just excellent, all she really needed to do was stand there and tell you about her most recent church calling, at 80 years of age. Her bishop had come to her house to welcome her (or so she thought) to the new ward. But no, instead, she was called to be the new ward *Primary* president—at 80. Isn't that great? To hear Sister Walker bear testimony of the joy of her calling was something I shall never forget.

I can look to my own mother for a similar example. Last Easter, our family was all gathered at my parents' home in Phoenix. While I was talking with one sister in the family room, we could hear the delight in the voice of another of our sisters, who was down the hall and out of sight. "Mom!" she exclaimed. "You look adorable! That is the cutest outfit on you!" Now I was thinking my mother must have purchased a new spring outfit for Easter. But I had missed the boat entirely. Indeed my sister was right. My mom did look adorable—as she walked out in her khaki skirt, yellow button-down shirt, and yes, den mother neckerchief.

My 76-year-old mother said, "I'm off to Cub Scouts! I'll be back in a couple of hours." And then she proceeded to gather all of her grandsons who were in the Cub Scout age range and whisked them off with her own pack to the Easter activity. They had a ball.

What a lesson my mom taught her grown children that day. Surely no one would have faulted her had she cancelled Cub Scouts over the holiday when all seven of her children had come home from coast to coast to Arizona. But she didn't want to let her boys down. She loves them, and she served them with all of her heart.

No matter where we are in our life's journey, each of us has the opportunity to influence many people in our individual realms. That influence extends to people in our families, our neighborhoods, our wards, our workplaces—everywhere we go. Sisters, it's our responsibility to be instruments for the Lord and empower others with the spiritual

confidence and strength that we value so much.

Just a few weeks ago, I was reminded of my own responsibility as a mother when I was out shopping with my daughters. As if shopping for swimsuits is not dreadful enough, right? We all know it ranks right up there with medieval torture, only it's a little more humiliating. Well, there we were in the store, we were looking, and one of my daughters said, "Mom, I have found a really cute suit and I *really* want it." She took me around the corner and showed me what she'd found, and I could feel the spirit of our lovely morning together beginning to evaporate. "You don't really want that suit." (I tried the easy argument first.) "It's not very cute." (What a weak attempt.) "Yes I do," she said. "It's so cute, and it's much more modest than most of the other ones for sale." She started wearing me down. I had to dig deep. "True." I said, "but it's still not quite within the OK zone for our family standards. What about this one?" (OK, now right here is where you try to imagine two faces looking at each other, rolling their eyes in unison, and then looking at me like I had just suggested some hideous thing out of the 1920s.) Then her sister jumped to her defense. "Mom, it's pretty modest, you've got to admit."

We went back and forth, two against one, until finally I did what many worn-down mothers do in similar situations. "Call your father," I said. "Let's see what he has to say." So we got on the phone and called my husband, and he said what every supportive priesthood holder says to his children: "It's up to your mother."

Touché. He was helping me step up to my responsibility. Now in his defense, he couldn't see what we were looking at, but we've had these kinds of conversations before.

"OK," I said. "Then the answer is no." I was hoping the moment had passed. But come on, ladies, we all know our kids don't give up that easily.

"Mom," one daughter said (a new idea had just popped into her young, agile mind), "didn't you listen to conference a few days ago when they told us kids should make decisions and parents should let them learn from their mistakes? Huh, Mom, remember the girl who had to decide whether to play soccer on Sunday? What about that?"

This needed to end, fast.

"Well," I said, "I'll have to let you make a mistake on something else, not this and not today." Pathetic, I know. But it was pretty much all I could come up with in the moment.

It was certainly not my best mothering moment, but thankfully on that day it was enough. We left the store with exactly zero swimsuits. But on the plus side, both of the girls were fine. And the experience led to a great discussion. We were able to verbalize that more than any rule their parents could impose, what really mattered was for them to develop their own good judgment.

Why do I even waffle? I only complicate things for myself and encourage my kids to try to wear me down again on another issue a different day. Children need and actually want

strong parents who can set family standards and stick to them.

Strong women arm themselves, their children, and the youth over whom they have influence. Sisters, go back to your homes and in the kindest way, be stronger. Set a standard in your home and your life and stick to it. No waffling. You can do it. And you will bless others' lives in the process.

We all love the story of the 2,000 stripling warriors. And we all look to those mothers who had such a strong influence on their sons. There are only just a few lines that mention the mothers, but they are the critical lines that give us a clue about the character of these young warriors.

Alma 56:47–48—“They did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. “And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it.”

OK, we love those boys and we love their mothers, but have you ever stopped to wonder, *what exactly did those mothers do* so their sons knew with a surety that those women were completely faithful and steadfast in the gospel? What was it about their mothers' daily actions that led Helaman to say about the warriors, “Never before had I seen so great courage, nay not amongst all the Nephites. . . . they never had fought, yet they did not fear death” (Alma 56:45, 47).

Those few lines speak volumes to me. It is clear that those mothers' daily lives must have been living examples of faith and works. In addition to keeping the commandments, personal and family prayer, studying the scriptures, I would imagine there was a great unity and shared commitment among those women. You simply couldn't have 2,000 boys from one community all faithful and courageous if their mothers hadn't been unified in their love of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

It could never have worked had the women been judgmental of each other, compared themselves to each other, or spoken ill of one other. It would be just about impossible.

If we are to be those kinds of covenant women and raise those kinds of children for the next generation, we have got to be as unified as those women were. How would we stack up if we were asked to be a mother to one of the stripling warriors? I don't know about you, but I'd need to step up my game.

Another of the tools that empowers us with the glory of God is certainly the house of God—his holy temple. When we are endowed, we are blessed with God's protective power.

Our church's effort to build temples all around the world is a mighty validation of our theme scripture. If Nephi saw our day and observed how God's covenant people scattered across the earth could be armed with righteousness, surely he saw temples.

The pioneers, who sacrificed nearly everything to build the Kirtland Temple, understood the importance of these buildings. In the dedicatory prayer revealed to Joseph Smith, we read the fulfillment of a portion of Nephi's vision:

D&C 109:22—"And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them."

And in Nauvoo, pioneers sacrificed again, building a temple even when they knew they'd have to turn westward and leave it behind. They understood the blessings of the temple endowment would give them the strength to endure the inevitable trials that lay ahead of them.

Likewise, regular temple attendance today offers us protection in the midst of our adversities. If you want to be armed with righteousness, get to the temple.

So let's recap. To arm ourselves in these latter days, we *supplicate* through prayer; we *study* the scriptures; we *serve* willingly and abundantly, using our education and acquired skills for good; we *stay strong*, and we empower those around us; and we *seek* the Lord in His holy house, the temple.

The last thing I'd like to discuss is *support*—or in other words, no judging or grudging. As sisters in Zion, we all must work together. That's the way the Relief Society was organized in 1842, and I firmly believe that's how the Lord wants it to be. Though vastly different in many ways, we are united in the purposes of Relief Society recently reiterated in the book, *Daughters in my Kingdom*. Six million strong and in more than 170 countries, we sisters of the Relief Society work together to increase in faith and personal righteousness. Together we strengthen homes and families. And together we provide relief by seeking out and helping those in need.

Each of us is unique and walks our own individual path. Each of us is given different talents and abilities. Some of us are married; others are single. Some are divorced; others are widowed. Some of us work outside the home; some work full time, double time in the home. Some of us sew, or run marathons; others bake and blog. There are sisters who are great gardeners, readers or writers! It takes all of us, and we don't want to be without a single one of our sisters.

Our job is not to judge another's situation or her choices. Quite the contrary. Agency and personal revelation are two of the most beautiful and ennobling doctrines in our entire church. We should celebrate the principle that each of us gets to search for the path the Lord has in mind for us.

As individuals, we can turn to our patriarchal blessings, our marvelous church leaders, and especially our Heavenly Father for inspiration, guidance and personal revelation as we walk our individual roads.

We were not given the Holy Ghost “just in case.” He is there to guide us. We are to learn the language of the Spirit and seek to understand its promptings so that we can be in tune with the Father’s will for us.

In a recent conference talk, Elder Quentin L. Cook counseled us to support each other with love. Speaking about the difficult choices women have to make, he said, “These are very emotional, personal decisions, but there are two principles we should always keep in mind. First, no woman should ever feel the need to apologize or feel that her contribution is less significant because she is devoting her primary efforts to raising and nurturing children. Nothing could be more significant in our Father in Heaven’s plan. Second, we should all be careful not to be judgmental or assume that sisters are less valiant if the decision is made to work outside the home. We rarely understand or fully appreciate people’s circumstances. Husbands and wives should prayerfully counsel together, understanding they are accountable to God for their decisions” (“LDS Women Are Incredible!” *Ensign*, May 2011).

There is no place in Relief Society for criticism, for holding grudges, or judgment. Only compassion.

Let us apply to each other President Uchtdorf’s recent conference admonition, and if you feel any negative feelings toward another sister or hold any grudge toward another, “Stop it.” Stop it today. You can if you choose.

There is simply no room for negativity that would drive away the Spirit from among the women of Relief Society. We sisters must be one in Christ and replace any divisiveness with a celebration of our diversity.

May I conclude today with one final thought and a personal story? As a frightened child in my bed, waiting for my parents to get home from the hospital—you know, after their car accident—I knew from personal experience that the Lord wanted me to be happy and filled with peace. Isn’t that what He told his disciples when He came to see them a final time after His resurrection?

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). What a gift—*His* peace. It is no small thing for us to know what His peace and His joy feel like. It’s not the world’s peace—it’s His.

Although we all will have bumps in the road so we can grow from adversity, the Lord has told us He wants us to rejoice and have joy in this life. Think about that, Sisters.

As latter-day women of the Church of Jesus Christ, we are tasked with so many important responsibilities. And yet these duties are not drudgery. There is joy to be found in study, in service, in supporting and strengthening each other, and in our personal communication with our God. That is joyous. And whether we find that joy is truly up to us.

Early this year, a cousin of my mother's sent my mom a letter. It was a letter about my mother's mother, so my grandmother, Elizabeth Layton Anderson. She was called Aunt Beth. And it's a story our family had never heard. Here's a portion of that letter from our cousin Phyllis:

"Nearly 65 years ago, I drove from Tucson to the Gila Valley for the final fitting on my wedding dress. After the fitting, I visited Aunt Beth Anderson. She was so very gracious and happy to see us. I was bubbling over with excitement, and I told Aunt Beth, 'I am so happy. In a week I graduate from the University of Arizona. In five days, my fiancé arrives home from the Navy after serving the past three years in World War II. In two weeks we'll be married in the Mesa Temple, and I have a high school teaching job waiting for me.'

"Aunt Beth replied, 'I can see why you're so happy, Phyllis. But you know, you can be this happy every day of your life if you choose to be.'

"I was surprised at her answer, but gave it deep thought and determined that I would take her advice. Each morning of my life, I would wake up, thank the Lord for my blessings and then say, 'This is going to be the happiest day of my life. How can I make it so?' My children even remember me going up and down the hallway singing, 'Oh What a Beautiful Morning,' which, *now* they say, made them happy first thing in the morning."

She goes on, "All of my life, I've tried to make each day happy. Even now, after losing my husband five months ago and being told by my oncologist that I have an incurable cancer and have only a few months to live, I keep myself happy. I believe death will be sweet for me because I will meet my husband, our son, our son-in-law and our grandson . . . and of course my parents. I also look forward to seeing Aunt Beth and Uncle Guy because they always made me feel happy. For me, death will be sweet because I believe in Christ and know He will be there to judge me." Signed, Phyllis Blake Larson.

What a sweet reminder from my grandmother.

Two words: Choose joy. May we all live so that we may be counted among the faithful women of Jesus Christ's church, which is the ultimate joy. And may we understand first-hand what it feels like to be "armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory." This is my prayer for all of the sisters of the Church, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.