

# Joy Cometh in the Morning

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Our daughter, Emily, was in the hospital in another state caring for her two-month-old baby, who had an upper-respiratory infection, and her two-year-old, Ella, who had come to visit her little sister.

It had been a difficult five days for Emily. Her husband was in the middle of final exams in a rigorous graduate program. Two children under two years of age is a large enough challenge under the best of circumstances. Finances were limited, and no extended family lived nearby for support. Emily had been wearing the same clothes, sleeping in the hospital by her baby, passing the two-year-old back and forth to her husband as he was able to break away from school. She was fatigued and frightened and lonely.

Ella could not stay happy long in the confines of her baby sister's hospital room, so our daughter took her to the children's playroom. Ella was delighted with the toys and puzzles. Unfortunately, the attendant came soon after Ella arrived to close the playroom. Ella threw herself on the floor in a full-fledged two-year-old tantrum. Can you imagine her mother's embarrassment as she looked around at the other children, who were very sick in contrast to Ella's robust countenance, leaving

obediently, dragging IV poles behind them? Emily picked up her distraught child and hurried out of the hospital. They sat down somewhere on a bench far from the eyes and ears of strangers. Emily let Ella finish out the tantrum but was unable to contain her own emotions, which she had kept pent-up for five days in the hospital. She gave way to her own good cry. Imagine Emily's surprise to have Ella look up at the tears now streaming out of her mother's eyes and say with remarkable two-year-old compassion, "I'm sorry, Mommy. Don't cry. Ella happy now."

In our later phone conversation, we talked about how difficult it is to handle a tantrum, especially when it happens outside of our homes, where we have established some sense of routine for these breakdowns. Emily was grateful she didn't try to redirect Ella in the middle of a difficult day. Emily was blessed with a moment of joy, even though she had miles to go in resolving the immediate concerns of her family.

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Today I would like to develop the topic of finding joy and teaching it to our children. So often the joy is only realized in hindsight, in subtle, surprise interactions or through simple conversations each of us has had with our children, with ourselves, and with our Heavenly Father. In a myriad ways daily, each of us can be “surprised by joy.”

Our lives are a combination of disappointment, loneliness, and sorrow interspersed with memorable joyful moments. We can feel overwhelmed and discouraged and happy all in the same day or even the same hour. Joy and sorrow are twinborn, as is reflected in a scripture from Psalms: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” I would like to discuss some of the ways that happens for each of us.

In late December I received a letter asking me to speak at Women’s Conference. This wasn’t the first time I had been asked to speak. The minute an invitation like this comes into your life, things are different. The topic is with you at the grocery store, as you go to sleep, as you push grandchildren on swings in the park, even as you work on church assignments. In January and February I browsed the Church Web site, entering the word *joy* into the search engine. Talks with titles like “Finding Joy in Life” and “Joy in the Journey” came up. I took them to bed with me at night, usually finding them all crumpled in the covers in the morning. I looked in the Topical Guide, read each scripture suggested, and even wrote them all out on paper with my own observations and impressions. I felt good. I was learning and loving the time spent researching and pondering the topic of joy, and the deadline was far away—or so it felt.

But after returning from a training trip to Africa, on March 1 I found a letter from the First Presidency notifying me that I was assigned to speak in general conference a few weeks later. The Women’s Conference talk left my mind—so did joy. After conference I saw

that we were now into April, and there were just days left until the deadline for turning in a finished talk to the Women’s Conference committee. My talk in general conference was about finishing, and I wondered if I could finish this talk, which is almost three times longer than the conference talk, which took several weeks to complete. I now had four days to the deadline.

Now what would you all do? I am sure each of you would start writing. But not me. I looked at my home office, which is also my husband’s home office, and saw stacks of papers, books, mail, candy wrappers, cups, and bedroom slippers. I thought, *I can’t write in this mess*. In our mission we regularly told the missionaries in zone conference that the Spirit can’t work in a dirty living space. So I proceeded to purge, clean, and organize. In this cleaning frenzy I found a number of notes and letters that I wanted to respond to from kind friends and neighbors, wedding invitations that needed attention, an overlooked bill in the stacks of paper, and much more. As I organized I started becoming distraught. I found tears running down my face as I thought of all the important things I needed to do, and now I was adding more necessary, good things to do to that long, impossible list.

After I had my meltdown, I remember talking to Heavenly Father just as though He were on the couch next to my piles of unorganized matter. I felt He was close and aware of my dilemma. He knew my heart and all my good intentions, and I knew the thank-you notes and even missed wedding gifts could wait for another time. He wanted me to start writing right where I was and finish well, basically the message I had tried to deliver in conference. Why was I the last to learn?

I felt renewed even though it was late at night. I knew joy could come in the morning. Off to bed I went and the next day—in the middle of the stacks—I wrote the fragments of conversations I’d had with people who

smile through tears of frustration, sorrow, or difficulty.

A dear friend and I talked about her struggles with her grown children. She said that one morning she walked alone along the lakefront near her home in downtown Chicago. She was thinking about her children, her busy schedule, and a new church calling. She was also thinking about a gospel lesson taught in Relief Society the previous day. The lesson was on joy. She began to wonder when she had last felt real joy in her life. She couldn't remember a recent time when she had not felt burdened and at wit's end. As she walked she began to pray that she might remember when joy had lifted her spirit. As soon as this prayer formed in her mind, the sun burst from behind the overcast clouds in the sky to light up the lakefront and the beautiful Chicago skyline. As the sun lit the day, she experienced a deep and sudden affirmation that she was loved. That awareness gave her the power to cope with the problems at hand. Joy came quietly on a gray fall morning in Chicago to Mary.

Jesus Christ came into this world not only to suffer for our sins but to take upon Himself our struggles and pain. "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; . . . he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people" (Alma 7:11). Why did He do this? "That his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12).

He knows how we struggle, how we feel, and He knows how to send his love and comfort. He will do this as often as we are in a position to receive those messages. Joy comes from knowing He loves us and from seeking His help. Then we can experience those exquisite moments of joy when we are "encircled . . . in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15).

As mothers we raise our children to one day become worthy and righteous parents. Our

little daughters cuddle and care for dolls. We catch them mothering, sometimes with our very own words. Now that can be embarrassing! They can't wait to become mothers. I have four lovely daughters and one daughter-in-law. All of them pursued professional careers at the university level, but their one great desire was to become mothers.

Imagine the devastation felt throughout our family when one of our daughters was told after years and years of medical procedures that she would not be able to bear children. I remember well that Easter morning when the last procedure failed and the diagnosis was given that she and her husband would be childless. My husband and I felt our own hearts breaking. We had been to the temple earlier and felt such love and confidence that this sweet daughter and her dear husband would have a family. So the contrary news that day was difficult. Easter seemed tainted. Our belief had not changed or been shaken. But our joy in the magnificent patterns of seasons and the glory of rebirth and spring buds and blossoms had temporarily drained away.

Soon after that dismal Easter Sunday, armed with the sweet reassurance from the temple, our daughter and son-in-law began the adoption process. Later we found out that a courageous unmarried young girl was struggling with a difficult decision about what to do with her pregnancy at the same time we were in the temple praying for a child. This young girl felt an answer to her prayers. She knew she would be giving her baby the gift of both a mother and a father who were sealed in a temple of the Lord. She knew she could be a mother, but she unselfishly decided that was not enough for this little one she was carrying. Our daughter and son-in-law now have two adopted children. Joy comes in waiting patiently on the Lord and trusting in His own patterns for fulfilling promises. We don't know how the answers will come to our prayers. But the Lord does, and His comfort is "joy in the morning."

Some months ago another one of our daughters wanted to make and keep a commitment to read her scriptures daily. She had heard a motivational and inspired speaker from an earlier Women’s Conference say that just having them open in a conspicuous place would be an impetus for keeping this kind of a goal and a wonderful example for her children. She began reading in the Book of Mormon and after some days was in 2 Nephi chapter 11, pondering Jacob’s testimony of his Redeemer. She left her scriptures open right on the end table by the couch, basking in the joy of reading the scriptures and in her heart thanking the speaker who had given such good advice.

She went to the laundry room and had begun sorting and loading the wash when her four-year-old boy, Logan, came running to find his mom—carrying the entire chapter 11 of 2 Nephi in his hands. He knew what his sixteen-month-old sister, Ashlyn, had done would be of grave importance to his mother, and that’s why he reacted so quickly, just not quickly enough. Now what do you do to teach a sixteen-month-old not to tear up scriptures? Nothing, except put them in a spot where this won’t be a possibility in the future. Did my daughter have good intentions? Yes. Was she trying to put into practice basic gospel habits? Yes. Was she trying to let her children see her reading the scriptures daily? Yes.

“Why is it so hard to do the right things?” she asked me in a conversation later that week. She told me that this was the chapter most marked in her scriptures. (She meant before the baby colored on it.) We talked about other attempts at keeping the commandments and all the things that can happen to impede our efforts. Think about going to the temple regularly. If a tire is going to go flat, it happens then. We both decided that the best we can do is to adjust and just keep trying to live each and every commandment. I don’t think that it is the plan to have righteous intentions and desires be fulfilled easily or without obstacle.

But we know that when the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the blessings of living it are our focus, joy comes. Our conversation ended in a happy place—thinking about diligent Logan, who at least knew how important the scriptures were to his mom. Now that counts for a lot! The moment of the incident was painful to Tina, but after time we could talk, we could laugh; we found ourselves surprised by joy.

Joy is a gift from God. Thinking back to Emily, crying right beside Ella and acknowledging her own emotions allowed for a sweet moment. Why? Because Emily did not try to control or force perfection in a two-year-old or in her own vulnerable self. The result was a joyful moment, a gift from God, a gift from the Holy Ghost. As we become joyful mothers, and it will take a lifetime to do this, our children can experience and become part of those moments. Becoming a joyful mother of children is what we are about, and making sure our days have as many joyful moments as possible is a righteous goal. The ripping apart of chapter 11 by little Ashlyn was a painful experience for her mother, but a conversation with someone who loved her and understood her and had experienced similar situations helped. Conversations with loved ones, friends, and, most important, Heavenly Father help us find joy. This talk was blessed by my conversation with Him several weeks ago when He helped me create order out of chaos.

Think about learning a new skill. For me this was learning how to use a computer while in my fifties. I learned in the mission field when it became a necessity. Our numbers of missionaries dropped so dramatically when visas to enter Portugal became a challenge that the only answer to having enough missionaries in the field to preach the gospel was to put me right into the mission office. My skill level on the computer increased dramatically with each new task I had to assume.

Maybe we shouldn't whine about life becoming too hard. Maybe we are being given new opportunities to move to higher skill levels. I can now send documents with attachments, highlighted, edited, and so forth. I couldn't even turn a computer on a few years before. In our parenting, with every child we add to the mix in our family, the skill level of our mothering goes up a notch. And just as the difficulty of using a computer increases with new technical capabilities, so every obstacle you successfully overcome builds your ability to parent. The parenting challenges escalate as you safely navigate through the childhood years to arrive at the ultimate test of living with teenagers. If you keep learning and don't give up, you will get better and better. And then before you realize it, your teenagers turn into wives and husbands, mothers and fathers.

At the same time, your own parents who have looked forward to those golden years are finding them "laced with lead." As I was almost finished with this talk, a call came from a daughter telling us that my mother had fallen and broken her hip. Mom was in an ambulance and on her way to the hospital, and my father, whose short-term memory has disappeared, was with some kind strangers. For the winter Mom and Dad were in Southern California, far from family members. My husband and I were with a daughter for the blessing of her newest baby in northern California. We quickly rented a car and started driving. All the way during the six-hour drive, we talked by cell phone to my father, his Samaritan helpers, and my mother in the hospital waiting for X-rays.

Upon arriving, we found Dad with a kind couple from the ward, who just happened to be the Relief Society president and former bishop. How relieved we were as they said Dad was doing well and had related in considerable detail his sweet two-year courtship with Mom. My husband stayed with my father, and I drove immediately to the hospital. I found Mother alone and in so much pain. But all she

could talk about was her dear companion of 65 years. I spent my days and nights with my mother, coordinating two surgeries, transfusions, and reactions to medicine. My husband spent his days and nights with my father, reassuring him over and over that his Lillie would be all right. The transfer after a six-day hospital stay to the rehab center was difficult, and the drive home to Salt Lake with my father but without my mother was even more difficult. But as we prayed for direction and help, it came in surprising ways.

Our daughter Lisa said, "Mom, we will pack up the four children and come," and they did. Her strong and capable husband helped my mother return to Salt Lake City on the airplane so she could rehabilitate closer to family. Help came as we prayed with Dad and saw the anxiety disappear even before the "amen" was uttered. Help came as my husband and father gave a blessing of healing and comfort to Mom.

I have thought over and over again, *Why is life so complicated?* Why is there so much "unearned" suffering? Consequences are one thing, but old age is another; who earns that? In our heart of hearts we think we should be immune to some of our deepest heartache because we are trying so hard and contributing so much. Sometimes I think suffering is the answer to that arrogance. Do we search for food and water and firewood every day in a parched desert or seek safety in a crime-infested, concrete inner city? We do not. In some ways these trials reinforce how blessed our lives really are. Hospitals with tubes and tests and insurance tangles and all the things that kill the spirit outright while trying to heal the body are nevertheless a gift to us.

Joy comes through misery and heartache, through having a husband to love and protect your father through the night while you sit in a chair accumulating two days of body odor. It comes in the memories of childhood and your admiration for a remarkable, resilient mother whose caretaking you only now begin to

comprehend. Joy comes in sharing these things with your children, who have learned much about making and keeping commitments from their grandparents.

The joy is not in arriving, but in getting better each time a new challenge is thrown your way, each time you learn in a new situation. Joy comes not from having a pain-free life but from conquering the obstacles, even when they are painful. If our children can see us enduring well and finding laughter, humor, and joy in the process, I think some of this will rub off on them. It will take many conversations, sometimes late at night, early in the morning, and all the times in between, but it is worth it. And as was prayed for in the temple dedication at Kirtland, we can pray that Heavenly Father will send us forth from our homes armed with His power, with His name upon us, with His glory round about us, and

strengthened by His angels (see D&C 109:22). We pray through the night and joy comes in the morning in the form of a new perspective, a new energy and resolve, a conversation with someone who validates or mentors or just remembers.

Joy comes in the form of the natural world bursting with sunlight and patterning resurrection and rebirth just as we imagine birth will not be part of our life's experience. Joy comes through crying with the toddler whose tantrum pushed us to the limit in the first place. Joy comes in cyclical patterns and seasons. I find more humor in my daughter's dealing with a tantrum than in my own tears of frustration wanting to help my father understand that I have not kidnapped him. Joy comes through our own gratitude for the Holy Ghost teaching and testifying of the plan of salvation. Of this I testify in the joyful name of Jesus Christ, amen.