



John Bytheway:	00:00:03	Hello everyone and welcome back to another episode of followHIM. Today we're doing one of our Voices of the Restoration with one of our voices of the continuing restoration, Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat. Our topic today for these voices is the Relief Society. Hank, what are you looking forward to today talking about The Relief Society?
Hank Smith:	00:00:26	I'm excited that we're doing this, one because there isn't a revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants that covers this really. I think it's helpful that the church decided to put this in the manual. I'm excited for Gerrit to walk us through how this came about and maybe we can talk about where it is today. The longest running women's organization in the world, I believe.
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	00:00:48	Well, I apologize for the fact that I am the one talking about it, merely because I'm the guest for the Voices of the Restoration. No doubt, could find someone who's better at it than me. I'm happy to do my part.
John Bytheway:	00:01:03	There's a few voices that we talk about. We talk about Emma Smith, we talk about Eliza R. Snow. We talk about Sarah Granger Kimball. It'll be fun to look at how all of these got together. I noticed this morning, Hank, that the initials for Eliza R. Snow are the same as Early Relief Society. Huh? Is there a connection?
Hank Smith:	00:01:24	Okay.
John Bytheway:	00:01:25	So yeah. Eliza R. Snow, she was a smart woman and had such a great way of writing.
Hank Smith:	00:01:34	I believe, and Gerrit can correct me here, I believe Joseph Smith said, this isn't just about helping the poor. This is about saving souls. It's much bigger than, I mean the Relief Society does do amazing, wonderful things for the poor and to give relief, but I think Joseph, there's something bigger in mind with exaltation.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:01:52 From the very beginning. It has this dual purpose of, sure there's gonna be a lot of temporal help that you're providing, but that's not the end result of it. That there is in fact both temporal and especially spiritual. And I think that that's represented both in the early and then the reconstituted Relief Society when it's in Utah. Even though we don't have a classical revelation that we can say this is connected to Doctrine and Covenants section 76 or whatever. We do have Doctrine and Covenants section 124, because it really is the context in which the origin of the Relief Society is founded. Joseph Smith receives one of his biggest, most powerful revelations ever in Nauvoo in 1841. That specifically talks about the building of the temple and how essential the building of the temple is. The Relief Society is going to grow out of people taking Doctrine and Covenant section 124 seriously.

00:02:57 If this is really a revelation from God, and this is really what God wants us to do, then how are we going to do it? I'm sure you've covered section 124 far better than we'll cover it here. If you go to section 124, the Lord is reiterating over and over and over again how important this temple is going to be. When you go to verse 39, "...I say unto you that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places, wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipalities, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name...verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people;

00:04:06 For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fullness of times." Imagine you're in Nauvoo and you hear this revelation. This is a greater promise than was given with the building of the Kirtland temple. The Kirtland temple, they're gonna have the endowment of power poured out upon them. Here they're told God intends to reveal things that have actually never been revealed since the foundation of the world and that it's essential for the creating of Zion, the ordinances that are gonna be a part of it. With how powerful this revelation is, men and women in Nauvoo, many of them make the building and the completion of this temple a part of their dedication to the faith. This is exactly what Sarah Granger Kimball is doing when the idea of the Relief Society

comes along, that they are trying to do things to help with the temple building process.

00:05:24 To further that end, they create an organization. In fact, we could actually read from Sarah Granger Kimball. She talks about this. This is later in life that she talks about it. So she's looking back on the founding of it. She and another woman, they get together their seamstresses. She says that the subject of combining our efforts for assisting the temple hands came up in conversation. She desired to be helpful but had no means to furnish it. I told her I would furnish the materials if she would make some shirts for the workman. So, this beginning of this idea is, okay, we have all these people laboring on the temple, a lot of them poor people, and instead of spending time working so they can then have money to buy clothing, they're not, because they're donating their time to build the temple. We need to make them clothes so that they have clothes to fill the gap for the fact that they're consecrating their time to work on the temple. So already from the very beginning, the purest of motives, this is an idea between the two of them, her and Mrs. Cook. What are we going to do?

John Bytheway: 00:06:36 I love that important point. The outcome isn't, hey, let's form a society and make shirts. No, the outcome was, let's further the construction of the temple. What can we do? Hey, we could save the laborers some time if we made them shirts so that they could finish working on the temples.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:06:54 When you talk about the organization of the Relief Society, Sarah Kimball is actively thinking, anxiously engaged in a good cause. What can I do? Okay, they're not gonna let me go down and blast rock out of the quarry. That's a little verboten in 19th century American gender roles. I'm not gonna be allowed to do that, but what can I do that actually would have an impact? This is really emblematic of many of the women in Nauvoo during this time. I mean even after the Relief Society's formed, Mercy Fielding Thompson is going to create a penny and sewing society where they're trying to get people to subscribe, to donate to the temple. All because they're trying to find ways that they can bring to pass this revelation that God has given. It's started by a conversation, you and I both sew. I'll bet we could make shirts for the workmen. That is the smallest of simplest of things.

00:08:07 Well, as they start to talk to more people about it, there's more people who wanna be involved. We probably need to, if we're gonna create like an organization, we should drop some rules of the organization if we're gonna do that. She continues. She says,

it was suggested that some of our neighbors might want to combine means and efforts with ours. We decided to invite a few to come consult with us on the subject of forming a lady's society. The neighboring sisters met in my parlor. So, this is Sarah Granger. If you've ever gone to Nauvoo, the Sarah Granger Kimball home is also the one that you're least likely to go to. That's because she lives so far away from everything else. You gotta want to go there. It's an amazing experience. If you do go there, you should always go. If you ask people like which house? Oh, I went to this house. I went to that. Did you go to the Sarah Granger Kimball home?

Hank Smith: 00:09:00 It's way over there.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:09:02 It's down the road. You gotta wanna go there. Apparently, people did make that long walk because they're meeting in her home. They meet in her home, in my parlor and decided to organize. I was delegated to call on Sister Eliza R. Snow and ask her to write for us a constitution and bylaws and submit them to President Joseph Smith prior to our next Thursday's meeting. She cheerfully responded and when she read them to him, he replied that the constitution and bylaws were the best he'd ever seen. Talk about something snowballing. Sarah Granger and her friend are like, we should probably try to do something. And then they think, well there's probably other people who are willing to donate time or money or cloth to make this. It shows you the regard that they have for Eliza R. Snow that once they realized we got dozens of people who want to be a part of this, we need to have someone draw something up.

00:10:02 We'll go to Eliza R. Snow because clearly, they see her as a brilliant mind and a brilliant writer because that's the thought that comes in their mind is, okay, if we need to write something, we're gonna go to Eliza. She knows what she's doing. They draw them up. They want this new society that they're forming to not just be on the outside of the church. They want it to be recognized and accepted by the church in the sense that they're trying to help the church build the temple. That they want the church to be okay with what their bylaws are. They don't wanna be fighting against the church with their organization. They want to be part of the process, not against it. This is what she says Joseph says after he reads the bylaws that they're amazing, but he said, this is not what you want. So, imagine they've got these bylaws that he says, they're the best I've ever read. They're amazing. These are great and we're not gonna do this. Sounds like every time I've ever submitted an article to be published. This is amazing. This is great and we don't want it.

00:11:16 This is not what you want. Tell the sisters that their offering is accepted of the Lord and he has something better for them than a written constitution. I invite them all to meet with me and a few of the brethren in the Masonic Hall over my store next Thursday afternoon and I will organize the women under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood. So, this is how Sarah Granger remembers this conversation with Joseph. He further said that the church was never perfectly organized until the women were thus organized and he wished to have Sister Emma Smith elected to preside in fulfillment of the revelation, which called her an elect Lady. It's kind of cool to get this founding person's perspective. One of the greatest documents that we have in the church that many people listening or or watching have not read is the Relief Society Minute Book.

00:12:17 We have the original minute book for when the Relief Society was formed. It is all digitally available on JosephSmithpapers.org. So, if you go to JosephSmithpapers.org and then you go to administrative records, you will see that one of the things under the records of organizations is the Relief Society minute book. It's in Eliza R. Snow's handwriting because she's the one who's keeping the minutes of the meetings. These founding meetings are precious in what they tell us about the organization, what they thought the purpose of the organization was, how they intended to do it. But we say that it's not associated with a revelation. It's not associated with a revelation this week. But Joseph Smith directly associates it with Doctrine and Covenants section 25. Emma had been called an elect lady in Doctrine and Covenants section 25 received in the summer of 1830. So right after the church is formed and it tells Emma several things, she's gonna be a teacher, that she's going to help collect hymns, which she absolutely does that with the 1835 hymnals.

00:13:34 She's the driving force behind it, but it also talks about how she's an elect lady that she's going to be teaching. Well Joseph Smith, in these Relief Society minutes, will directly connect the two. He will state at their founding meeting. This is Eliza Snow writing this down, so it's gonna be in third person because Joseph Smith is speaking, but she's writing down what he spoke. President Smith read the revelation to Emma Smith from the book of Doctrine and Covenants and stated that she was ordained at that time that the revelation was given to expound the scriptures to all and to teach the female part of the community and not she alone, but others may attain to the same blessing. The second epistle of John, first verse was then read to show that respect was then had with the same thing

and that why she was called an elect lady is because she was elected to preside.

00:14:32 So Joseph is connecting not only Doctrine and Covenants section 25, but also from the New Testament, this discussion of an elect lady that she was called to preside over this meeting. And then you get to have these discussions about, well, what are we going to call this organization? What's the purpose of this organization? President Joseph Smith and Elders Taylor and Richards. So John Taylor and Willard Richards are like apostolic attaches to the, they're at a lot of these early Relief Society meetings. So is Joseph. And the meeting was addressed by President Smith to illustrate the object of the society that the Society of Sisters, and this is probably the greatest phraseology of 19th century history. The Society of Sisters might provoke the brethren to do good works.

00:15:24 That sounds about right, actually. I don't know why they're using the term provoke, but I think maybe the brethren need a little bit of prodding. This is going to provoke them to do good works, to force them to do good works. Into looking to the wants of the poor, searching after objects of charity and administering to their wants. To assist by correcting the moral. So, this is back to what Hank was talking about earlier. This is not just, hey, does someone need a food order? This is both temporal, but it is also--a key element is spiritual. To strengthen the virtues, correcting the morals and strengthening the virtues of the female community and saving the elders the trouble of rebuking that they may give their time to other duties and to their public teaching. Part of the point of this was to create this society where women could help each other maintain their feet on the gospel path and in so doing eliminate part of the need for Joseph Smith to have to try to say, okay, the sisters need to be doing this and the sisters need to be doing that.

00:16:45 Instead, the sisters would be telling the sisters what they need to be doing and how they need to do it, and they could help each other make decisions that would bring about greater morality and greater awareness of the gospel. From the very foundation, this is the idea behind it. I mean someone today might be like, well yeah, that's all fine and good, but all we really do in Relief Society now is we go in and we listen to a lesson and then we go home. It's like, well always a part of it was that there was gonna be, religious education would be part of it. The fact that you have someone teaching Relief Society lessons every now, every other week is absolutely an intent of the founding of the society. It's intended that it will be religious

education as well as an organization that would provide a relief from suffering.

John Bytheway: 00:17:40 It feels like the sisters initiated this and then Joseph Smith said, Ooh, I like this. Let's meet. It's gonna be even better. Would that be a good way to characterize it?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:17:51 I think so. When you look at it, Joseph receives Doctrine and Covenants section 25, 12 years earlier. He hadn't yet received the information about what that was supposed to mean. Here, as soon as Sarah Kimball, you know, and Eliza Snow come and say, look, we wanna create this women's organization to help the church to help build the temple, to help improve society. It's almost like lightning hits Joseph in that moment and he--this is what D&C 25 meant. This is it. You'll hear people say sometimes that good revelation is proceeded by good information. Maybe that's what's going on here. That it took these women taking the initiative to try to do whatever they could to build the kingdom of God, to impact Joseph to where Joseph goes, this is it. This is what we've been waiting for. This is what that revelation so many years ago was about.

00:18:59 There's a pretty interesting conversation that takes place in the immediate meetings about what are we gonna call ourselves? I'll share some of this because it demonstrates both the independent nature of the Relief Society and also their reasoning behind some things. It's first moved by Counselor Cleveland. This is Sarah M. Cleveland and seconded by Counselor Whitney that this society should be called the Nauvoo Female Relief Society. This is the initial plan, we're gonna call it the Nauvoo Female Relief Society. John Taylor, very parliamentary fashion, he offers an amendment. He says that it should be called the Nauvoo Female Benevolent Society, which would give a more definite and extended idea of the institution. That relief should be struck out and that benevolent should be inserted. John Taylor, like I'm not sure on the term relief, let's call it benevolent society. A benevolent society is something that you don't hear about today at all.

00:20:04 Like people don't use that term really, honestly anymore. But it was a pretty common way of talking about charitable organizations in the 19th century. Benevolent meaning it's a charitable society that's gonna do good works. John Taylor, the apostle, makes this motion. Well, of course it's seconded by Councilor Cleveland and it's unanimously carried on the amendment by Elder Taylor. He makes the amendment and everyone there is like, oh, okay, okay, benevolent society. This is the president, Emma. The president then suggested that she

would like an argument with Elder Taylor on the words relief and benevolence. So, I can only imagine deer in the headlight look that John Taylor then had. But they have the society's name, that Emma must have been elected the president of it. As they're trying to formalize things, John Taylor's like, you know what we should call it? Benevolent society, not Relief Society.

John Bytheway: 00:20:59

The President says...

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:21:02

Yeah, she'd like an argument with Elder Taylor on the words relief and benevolence. The best part about these minutes is Emma says that literally the next thing in the minutes is Joseph Smith saying, I move for an amendment that it be rescinded and we listen to what Emma...I mean, it says President Joseph Smith moved that the amendment vote be rescinded, which was carried. Now things are clearly heating up. The next thing in the minutes is actually Willard Richards trying to end the meeting. So, Willard Richards like, I think we should adjourn and Joseph's like, no, we better not adjourn. So very rapidly you have John Taylor saying, you know what? We need to change the name of this. Emma's saying like, I am not okay with this. Joseph saying, yeah, yeah, let's take that vote back then we're Richard's like, let's go to lunch. I mean Willard Richard's always wanted to go to lunch but, let's go to lunch.

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I think we've done enough here. That Willard Richards motion to adjourn doesn't carry. So, they're still there and they're now in this kind of awkward conversation. I think Joseph would rather present the case for the term benevolent than to have John Taylor present it. He doesn't really want this to be a big argument. I imagine Joseph's using very soft tone of voice as he is trying to explain it. This is what the minutes say. President Joseph Smith said, benevolent is a popular term. Usually when people start these societies they call them benevolent society. The term relief is not known among popular societies. Relief is more extended in its signification than benevolent and it might extend to the liberation of the culprit. It might be wrongly construed by our enemies to say that the society was to relieve criminals from punishment, to relieve a murderer, which would not be a benevolent act.

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He's trying to present the argument for benevolent in saying that when people create these charitable organizations, they don't use the term relief. They use benevolent because relief is generally a term used for immediate action. So, if I petition the legislature for relief, it's because some Missourians stole my farm and burned down my house and shot at me. What I want is for the Missouri government to immediately give me back my

farm. Usually that's the term and in fact it's kind of the way we use it today. When someone has a tsunami relief charity, what's the point of it? It's a very specific case. Well what are you doing? Well, we're going to help people that were hurt, killed, displaced in this tsunami. Earthquake relief funds for Haiti. It's not a general benevolent society for Haiti. It's this horrible event happened. We are going to specifically try to help in the wake of this horrible event.

00:24:10 So I think that's part of what Joseph is trying to do. I don't know how much tongue in cheek Joseph is, but the reality is he is well aware that even the slightest phraseology that's different than the rest of the world is immediately seized on by anti-Mormons who attack the church over it. We are talking about people in Illinois who will become so blinded in their anti-Mormon rage that in 1841--in the previous years, 4th of July, the Latter-day Saints have a gigantic celebration where thousands of people come. They sing patriotic songs and they carry the flag everywhere and they march the Nauvoo Legion in disciplined order and the very fact that it was such a huge celebration causes newspapers in the state to say, yeah, you gotta watch out for those Mormons. Look at how much power they have in their big celebration. So eventually the Latter-day Saint stop having big celebrations. Literally the same newspaper then turns around and says, yeah, they're obviously not patriotic because they don't even have celebrations for the 4th of July.

00:25:20 I told you that they weren't good Americans. I think Joseph's well aware that you can't win when it comes to the antagonists outside of the church. The best you can do is try not to give them fodder for easy attacks on the church and I think that might be what he's worried about here. The best you can do is make it harder for them to attack you, but they're gonna attack you. But Emma Smith's response to this is great, because it explains what her vision of the Relief Society was from its inception. I think you could make an easy argument, something the General Relief Society presidency and the church today continues to see as the purpose of the Relief Society. She responds the popularity of the word benevolent is the objection. That's her objection is one great objection. No person can think of the word as associated with public institutions without thinking of the Washingtonian Benevolent Society, which was one of the most corrupt institutions of the day.

00:26:31 I do not wish to have it called after the other societies. I've had people ask me before, women have asked, Relief Society, it's so weird. Why don't we just call the women's organization? Emma Smith deliberately wants it to have a name that no other

charitable organization has. She deliberately said, I don't want it called after the other societies of the world. Very quickly, Joseph is changing his position. President Joseph Smith arose to state that he had no objection to the word relief. That on question, this is exactly what Joseph teaches the brethren, both in the Quorum of the 12 and in the Council of 50. He says on any question, they ought to deliberate candidly and investigate all subjects. I really think one of the most important things we can get out of some of the teachings of Joseph Smith to these early organizations is that we all need to have much, much, much thicker skin and much, much, much smaller egos when it comes to our counseling, when it comes to ward councils, when it comes to being in a presidency and talking with your counselors. The natural man or woman, of course, the idea that you have, you think is a good idea.

00:28:00 It'd be weird to like have an idea that you knew was a terrible idea and just bring it up. Although probably that's happened in a few Elders Quorum presidencies like what if we just give a terrible idea and then no one will wanna do it? Then we won't have to do it. That's a good idea. Let's do that.

00:28:14 I'm not saying anything about my current Elders Quorum president, but that I was an Elders Quorum president once. So I'm well aware of what we do. We have a tendency to want everyone to agree with us because we spend a lot of time on it. So I'm thinking about how are we gonna do this certain ward thing and I think it out and I do the logistics and I plan it up. Then I go to ward council and I present my idea and immediately someone from one of the other auxiliary says, well what about this? Instead of listening to their, well, what about? I'm actually raging, I'm inside going, well you haven't thought about this the way I have. Of course, I've already thought about that. Why don't you just let my idea play out before you tell me how wrong it is? That's our natural reaction.

00:29:01 What Joseph will teach the sisters here, he does it by experience. He teaches them in real time. I want you to have real debates. I don't want you to say whoever spoke first, that's what we're going to do. Frankly, let me indict myself. I'm the worst person to ever go to a ward council. I'm literally the worst. Because, when I go, I would love to say that my primary objective is trying to get what God wants and what's best for the ward. What I'm really doing is what can I do or say that will offend the least number of people in here and will get me home faster? You know, someone says, Hey, you know, I think for our fundraiser for the ward, we should have square dancing lessons.

People pay money to get square dancing lessons. And in my mind, I'm thinking, Nope, that's not gonna work at all.

00:30:04 You'll get like four people. There's no way that's gonna happen. But what I say out loud is like, oh, you guys have planned, okay and we move on. A, because of laziness, but B, because I'm worried if I do say something it might offend the Sunday school president who came up with the idea. One thing I would urge everybody listening to do is if you're a part of a council, or presidency, or committee--I know it's really, really, really hard. I can say that because I've utterly failed at it every time I've ever tried. Try to not be me, but go to these councils not expecting that your idea carries the day. Because what does it mean if you get together with 10 people and the idea that you came up with on your own is 100% endorsed without any changes at all? It means that somehow your one thinking was better than a dozen people's thinking altogether.

00:31:05 We should not expect that we have an idea that isn't made better by the input of other people. The entire point of it is you have to say what you really think. When the Quorum of the 12 gets together, they don't wait for one person to talk and then say, yep, yep, whatever. He said, yep, let's go. They all say what they really think. Obviously, they're respectful and they're not calling each other pejoratives and names. Everybody expects that there's going to be some kind of challenge to the idea. Joseph would tell the council of 50, the reason why people failed to get good counsel is because they refused to agree to disagree long enough, that they might be able to draw out the gold from the draws, through the process of examination.

John Bytheway: 00:32:06 I love Gerrit, what you said. We need to have thicker skin and smaller egos. It goes back to what we talked about at first. The outcome was we gotta build a temple. When you're thinking of that, the how do we get there? I love that. Also, I wanted to ask you guys, because I'm thinking of that word relief as you brought it up. All the way back in Nephi's, brother Jacob in the Book of Mormon, he talks about you guys, uh, you gotta be careful. You're seeking after riches. If you seek for riches, seek for the kingdom of God and then this is Jacob 2:19. After you've obtained a hope in Christ, that's the outcome. You shall obtain riches if you seek them and you will seek them for the intent to do good, to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to liberate the captive, and listen to this word, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted. I'm thinking Jacob probably, yeah, we could form, I don't know, some sort of Relief Society or something.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:33:03 Yeah, some kind of group. An organization.

John Bytheway:	00:33:08	King Benjamin uses that same list later too.
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	00:33:10	What a great point. Maybe that's even on her mind when she comes up with that terminology.
John Bytheway:	00:33:16	Gerrit, you mentioned that hey, the things going on in the temple described in section 124 are not what happened in Kirtland. And they delayed in Kirtland. When Kirtland was dedicated, the heavenly manifestations were literally out of this world. I wonder if that motivated them. Let's get this done.
Hank Smith:	00:33:34	Let's go faster.
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	00:33:36	When you read the journals and letters of these women who are participants, it is very clear that they see this as the priority that God wants. They are not casual. Latter-day Saints. There is a great need because the very fact that the church is completely burned out of Missouri without getting any remuneration for their property. Think of all the money that went into the settlement of Missouri. Think of the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars of property that was purchased, homes that were built, and they get no remuneration at all for any of it. You have almost the entirety of the church that comes to Nauvoo without anything. Again, not because they're lazy, not because they were, you know, how could I not work today? Because they had it all stolen from them by a mob. We talked last time I was on about Amanda Barnes Smith.
	00:34:43	She gives that list. She had everything stolen from her by the mob, including her husband and her child killed. She's gonna show up in Nauvoo without anything and it's not because she never had anything. It's because she was robbed of everything. So, on top of the saints that are coming from Missouri that have lost everything, you also have hundreds and then thousands of Latter-day Saints that are being converted, especially in England in the early 1840s. Well, part of their conversion is a belief that they will immigrate to join with the body of the saints. Now the church, anymore, tells people to build up the church where you're at. You don't have to move to Salt Lake when you're baptized, but for these early saints they did. Well what does that mean? Well, it's a very expensive trip, not just across the ocean, but to get from New York City or from Boston all the way to the center of America.
	00:35:56	There aren't any railroads or at least hardly any that function. You are talking a months long journey where you're not making any money along the way. You're sacrificing everything that you

did have in England, paying the fair to get on the boat. When you arrive at Nauvoo, you have nothing. You barely have the shirt on your back. The need in Nauvoo for people to pull together their resources to help the people that are more indigent, it is a need that could never have been greater. In 1841 and 1842, you have thousands of people arriving all at once. None of them have anything and by the way, God wants us to build this incredible edifice which is the Nauvoo temple. How is that going to happen? When we go back to the discussion, Sarah Cleveland, she takes Joseph seriously when Joseph says, you know what? We need to be candid in our deliberations.

00:37:01 So she challenges Joseph Smith because Joseph said, look, we're gonna have enemies. They're gonna seize upon the fact that the word relief is weird and they're going to use it to attack us. Sarah Cleveland, to her credit, she says, concerning the question before the house, we should not regard the idle speech of our enemies. We designed to act in the name of the Lord to relieve the suffering. Sarah Cleveland is at least saying, Joseph, I see your point, but we don't do things based upon what our enemies do. We do things based upon what God wants us to do. Eliza R. Snow then next speaks in this discussion, she arose and she said she felt concur with the President and she means President Emma Smith, not President Joseph Smith. That she says, with regard to the word benevolent, there are many societies with which it has been associated with that are corrupt.

00:38:02 Popular institutions of the day should not be our guide. That as daughters of Zion we should set an example for all the world rather than confine ourselves to what has been the course heretofore pursued. One objection to the word relief--she is giving credence to what Joseph and John Taylor have said. One objection to the word relief is the idea that it's associated with some great calamity, just like I said, like tsunami relief, earthquake relief, that it's associated with some great calamity and that we intend on appropriating some extraordinary occasion instead of meeting common occurrences. Eliza R. Snow saying, look, benevolence is associated with all these corrupt societies, but what do we say about the fact that the way people talk about relief societies is they are designed for immediate relief of gigantic catastrophes. Eliza Snow says that people will think that we intend on appropriating some extraordinary occasions instead of meeting common occurrences. Emma Smith's response, we are going to do something extraordinary. When a boat is stuck on the rapids with a multitude of Mormons on board, we shall consider that a

loud call for relief. We expect extraordinary occasions and pressing calls. Emma pushes back by simply saying, we are going to do that too. We're both things. We're gonna do little things and we're gonna do big things. At this point, John Taylor said, I shall have to concede the point. Your arguments are so potent that I cannot stand before them. I shall give way.

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| John Bytheway: | 00:39:49 | Attaboy, John. |
| Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 00:39:51 | President Joseph Smith said, I also shall concede the point and all I have to give to the poor I shall give to this society. Councilor Whitney moved that the society be called the Nauvoo Female Relief Society and Eliza R. Snow offered an amendment by transposition of words instead of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society that it should be called the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. For a very brief moment, it was actually called the Nauvoo Benevolent Society. Women every other week could be going to Benevolent Society meeting which sounds very different. You can see how this resolves. I feel like it's a great example of both the independence of the women involved in this, and their brilliant thinking, as well as how much respect Joseph is giving to their ideas. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:40:44 | The council system there. |
| Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 00:40:47 | You see the council system in 100% action. Well what about this? Well, what about this? Notice Emma who had proposed that it be named a certain thing, even she when Eliza R. Snow said, let's move the words around, let's move female from the-- to the front. She agreed with it. By way of the council system, you end up with the name of the Relief Society. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:41:11 | Gerrit, this has been amazing. It's some things I'd never thought of before and I hope our listeners remember that Gerrit Dirkmaat has his own podcast called Standard of Truth and probably spends more time on these very things. One of the things that you've made me think about right here is with women in council meetings this way, was this unusual for them to be--because at that point women couldn't vote. They didn't serve on juries. |
| Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 00:41:38 | In most cases, yeah. The 19th century is a very gender bigoted society, especially as you look at it from the 21st century. I mean women are not allowed to vote. In most cases, they're not allowed to own property independent of their husband. If you're married and you buy something, well it literally becomes your husband's property. Now, widows, women whose husband passed away, they did have some ability to have property rights |

in that regard. But, you are 70 years away plus from the majority of women in the United States being able to vote. 80 years really. You are quite a long time away. Now, not for Latter-day Saint Women. I mean for Latter-day Saint Women, basically they're gonna be the first women in the country that will vote. When Utah Territory grants women the right to vote. In fact, many of these women who are founders of this female society, they will become leaders in the women's suffrage movement in part because they have experience in this organization and also because they have experience in voting.

00:42:54 It's tough for some of the national women's suffrage organizations to deal with the fact that traditionally they're thinking that these Mormon women are poor benighted women who have no rights and they're being forced into their religion and the practice of polygamy is horrible, and yet you have someone like Emmaline Wells who's like, well, I voted today. You can talk all you want about how oppressed I am, but I have the ability to get a divorce. I have the ability to leave my plural marriage whenever I want. I have the ability to vote, I have the ability to own property. The founding of the Relief Society is a harbinger of greater things in the national movement that later Latter-day Saint Women will be a part of pushing for women's right to vote. In fact, women in Utah are going to have their rights not increased by the federal government. They're going to have their rights taken away by the federal government.

00:43:56 Utah Territory grants women the right to vote. There are some commentators who think, well that's it. That's the end of the Mormon polygamy system. Now that women have the right to vote, they're gonna go into their private ballots and no matter--private ballot boxing--no matter what they tell their husband about who they're gonna vote for, when they're in there and it's a private ballot, they can vote wherever they want. So, they'll say, oh no, don't worry, I'll vote for the church leader. I'll do it and then they'll go in and like vote for the anti-Mormon guy to break the hold of. What happens is frankly a gigantic embarrassment for the federal government, because women granted the right to vote, vote overwhelmingly for the leaders of the church, in their various political positions that they're in.

00:44:41 In 1887, the federal government actually passes a law that disenfranchises women in the territory of Utah. They've been voting for 17 years at that point. Almost a generation of voting, and the federal government steps in and takes away their right to vote on the basis that they're not voting for the right people. They have their rights taken from them by the federal

government, not given to them. So, in 1870 they have the right to vote. In 1887, the federal government takes away their right to vote and they don't get it back again until 1896 when Utah becomes a state, and when Utah becomes a state part of its state constitution grants women the right to vote. Meanwhile, all of these other states, women don't have the right to vote in those states and it's not until 1919 that women in the United States have the right to vote. So, Latter-day Saint women are literally voting half a century before most of the women in the United States, because so many of the leaders of women's suffrage come out of this Relief Society organization. You can see how creating this organization with bylaws, with voting, with almost a parliamentary procedure, how that aids in this process. There's a lot to the founding of the Relief Society, outside of the amazing good that it does, that has impact both on Latter-day Saint history but also on American history in that regard.

Hank Smith: 00:46:17

Gerrit, you said earlier, that Sarah Cleveland openly in a meeting disagrees with Joseph Smith. He seems to take it in stride. What do we learn from him as a leader?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:46:32

Joseph practices what he preaches. Joseph is saying, look, we all need to speak our minds. When someone does, Joseph doesn't take the fact that they spoke their mind as well, now you're my enemy because you didn't agree with me, so now I hate you and I'm gonna find a way to destroy you. On my podcast, we talk about the Council of 50 that Joseph organizes, which is this organization of men preparing for the expulsion from the country and where they're going to settle. There, he's very clear as well. Look, you need to speak your minds on these things. In fact, Joseph there will say that if you do not speak your minds and say whatever's in your heart, whether it be good or bad, I will consider you nothing better than a set of dough heads. He uses this pejorative to talk about--don't be a dough head, essentially.

00:47:21

Joseph says, I will not forever be surrounded by a set of dough heads. He's very comfortable in his position in the sense that he's willing to hear other people out. Now Joseph, when it comes to antagonists attacking him, he can be fairly thin skinned in the sense that he gets emotional pretty quickly when people attack the church and attack him. But inside of the church, when they're in a council meeting, Joseph not only wants to hear what other people have to say, he chastises them for not saying anything. Hey, how come you're not contributing to this? I think that's the mark of a good leader. A good leader isn't insecure in their position. They're not worried that, oh, I

guess I'm no longer really the bishop because someone presented an idea that's not mine. They realize that there's this greater good that comes out of counseling together.

00:48:18 If my idea ends up not being the idea, great. If what we get in the end is what is good, then that's the entire point of having any of these callings anyway. The point isn't so we can feel better about ourselves. The point is so that we can move the work of the Lord along. Joseph demonstrates that to these women and they demonstrated in their discussions with one another. They're gonna have in these other discussions, what exactly is our society going to do? What if someone asks us what it is we do? Here's again from some of the minutes, President Emma Smith arose and proceeded to make appropriate remarks on the object of the society, its duties to others and also its relative duties to each other and they are these: to seek out and relieve the distressed. Now what a beautiful sentiment there. Sometimes we think of helping others as, you know what?

00:49:14 When Bill tells me he needs some help, then I'm gonna go help him. That's not what Emma says. Emma says, their job is to go out and find the people who are hurting. You should seek out the people. That each member should be ambitious to do good. That the members should deal frankly with one another, to watch over their morals and be very careful of the character and reputation of the members of the institution. Then she's asked the question, well, what should we reply when someone asks, what's the object of this society? Emma Smith says that it's for charitable purposes. There's a good example given of what she thinks we should do when there are disagreements and problems. So Emma teaches this, that all the proceedings that regard difficulties should be kept among the members. We shouldn't be airing our dirty laundry out to people who are just gonna use it to attack us.

00:50:17 There's gonna be differences of opinion inside the society. When that happens, that's an internal affair. That's something that you work out together. That don't go broadcast to the newspaper who doesn't care about you or a society at all. They don't care about you. They might care about getting a story, but they certainly don't care about you. As to the institution, she said, its objects are charitable. None can object to telling the good and the evil withhold. She said she hoped that all would feel themselves bound to observe this rule. So, look, we don't tell publicly any of the negative things that are going on. We tell publicly all the positive things, because that's how we make the society good. Another of her counselors says that she was very

interested, thought that we could not take too many pains in this matter to avoid all evil, we must avoid the appearance of evil.

00:51:16 We must pray for each other, that we may succeed in the work before us and have wisdom given us in all of our pursuits. I think might be not a bad time to share one example of them seeking people out. If you go to the church History library website, they have an entire section that's on the Relief Society and there are lots of documents surrounding it. So again, if anyone wants to research more about this, take some time on the incredible work that's been done helping us have the history of the Relief society as this essential organization of the church. There's lots of documents, some really great aspects there. One story in particular, I wanted to share is one in which you have this experience of them seeking someone else out who isn't willing to just go and get help herself. So, there's a woman by the name of Ellen Douglas.

00:52:16 She is one of these British converts, her and her husband and they move to Nauvoo and of course they don't have almost anything, because they left everything behind, basically. They've got eight children. Not to say that that will be a drain on your resources, but I have four and they aren't free. They require some things. They're in this difficult situation already financially. Then her husband passes away. Here she is, brand new country, brand new place, eight children, no husband. Things are tough. She writes a letter back to her parents in England. It's pretty special what she has to say. She tells them that she's a part of this relief society. In one of the letters she says, there is now in this city a female charity society, which I am a member of. We are in number eight or 900. Joseph Smith's wife is the head of our society.

00:53:26 We meet on Thursdays at one o'clock where we receive instructions both temporally and spiritually. Again, back to that point that Hank made. Well, right after she sends that letter, that's in June of 1842, this is gonna cause very significant financial distress, obviously because he's now gone. She's riding to her family in England who of course thinks she's crazy that she became a a Mormon, anyway. Went off and now your husband's dead and you see what happens when you follow after that. I'm sure there's all kinds of pejoratives that are levied at her. She says this, she goes into Nauvoo, because she lives a little outside Nauvoo. I went down into the city to visit where Anne lived and I stayed two nights and I had a horse to ride home on. The women where Anne lived would have me make

application to the Female Relief Society for some clothing, which I needed for myself and my family.

00:54:24 I mean, she's so poor, she doesn't have clothing for her kids. And I refused to do so. How incredibly applicable is this in our society today, where if you think it's just now where people don't want to seem like they're getting charity? Well, here she is doing exactly that, where they're saying, Hey, you need to ask the Relief Society for some help. And Ellen's like, no I'm not gonna do that. But they don't stop there. So, you have people saying, you know what? The Relief Society can help you. No, I'm fine. And that's how things could have ended. But that's not how things end because the point of the Relief Society is to seek out and help people even when they're saying that they don't need help. She goes on to say, I refused to do so. She said I need something and that I had been so long sick and that if I would not do it myself, she would do it for me.

00:55:29 I agreed and we went to one of the sisters and she asked me what I needed most. I told her that I needed a many things. While I was sick my children were out of their clothes because I couldn't mend them. So, she said that she would do the best she could for me. Anne came over in a few days and they brought the wagon and they fetched me such a present as I have never received before from any place in the world. The things they sent me were worth as much as 30 shillings. She didn't want charity. She fought against getting charity and the way she described what they gathered together for her, the greatest present that she had ever received in the world. Of course, her family so terribly antagonistic towards her. She is gonna let her parents know, dear parents, there are many things which I wish I could mention to you that would do you good.

00:56:31 She goes on to say that they want some cousins to come visit. We should be glad to see any of you. I never in my life enjoyed myself better than I now do. We had a conference here which began on the 6th of April, lasted for five days. I attended it four days and it supposed that there was from 15 to 20,000 persons present and the teaching which we heard made our hearts rejoice. I for one feel to rejoice and to praise my God that he ever sent the elders of Israel to England, that he ever gave me a heart to believe them. This woman's lost her husband and now is living in absolute poverty and her response is to praise God because she has the truth. And there's a reason why when you study these women from early Latter-day Saint History, you come away going, I am so far behind where they are at.

	00:57:24	If I could only somehow get close to unlatch their shoe latchet. She goes on to say, I want to know whether you believe my testimony or not concerning the prophet of the most high God, because the day will come when you will know that I have told you the truth. She is bold in her declaration of her testimony. I would be remiss if I didn't share one of the greatest testimonies of all time comes to us from the Relief Society Minute book. It's from Lucy Mack Smith. She's one of the people at these early founding meetings. What she says is captured and boy, man, you can feel Lucy's testimony in it. Mother Lucy Smith said, this institution is a good one. We must watch over ourselves. And this is to me the greatest explanation of what being a member of the church is the simplest, easiest explanation she gives here.
	00:58:32	That she came into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to do good, to get good, and to get into the celestial kingdom. She said, we must cherish one another and watch over one another and comfort one another and gain instruction that we all might sit down in heaven together. We came into the church to be saved, that we may live in peace and sit down in the kingdom of heaven. If we listen to and circulate every evil report, we shall idly spend the time which should be appropriated in reading the scriptures, the Book of Mormon. We must remember the words of Alma and pray much at morning, noon and night and feed the poor, et cetera. She said she was old that she could not meet with the society but a few more times and she wished to leave her testimony that the Book of Mormon is the book of God, that Joseph is a man of God, a prophet of the Lord set apart to lead the people. If we observe his words, it will be well with us. If we live righteously on earth, it will be well with us in eternity. What a beautiful, beautiful testimony surrounding the formation of the early society.
John Bytheway:	00:59:55	You apply that to today. What did you say, Gerrit? Instead of reading what's being said about us?
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:00:03	Yeah, if we circulate every evil report, so if we spend our time idly doing that, gossiping and talking about the evil, instead, we could spend that time reading the scriptures. We could spend that time taking care of the poor. We've gotta pray. It's similar to how Brigham Young talks about the Word of Wisdom in Utah where he says, if we stop spending money on alcohol, tobacco, and coffee and tea think how much more money we'd have to help poor people cross the planes. If we redirected that.
John Bytheway:	01:00:35	It's intentional is the word. What did President Nelson say recently? Take charge of your own testimony.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:00:44 And these women did. What better example of people who take charge of their and are defensive of their own testimony and defensive of the church. Another of these early founding members is Zina Huntington Jacobs. Boy, when the mobs are attacking, killing, and burning and looting, boy, she is pretty adamant. In her journal, the mobs burning, attacking and looting does not change her testimony. It changes her feeling about the country she lives in, but it doesn't make her go. Yeah, I guess, I mean, Joseph Smith got murdered, so I guess he must not really have been a prophet. Here's an entry she has in her journal in response to all the violence that's going. She's talking about there's places that are burned. The saints are being driven. When I cast my eyes roundabout, what do I behold? Every brother armed. His gun upon his shoulder to protect his family and brethren from the violence of the furious mob that are now burning all that falls in their way all about the county.

01:01:48 Ah liberty, thou art fled. When the Wicked rule, the people mourn. But she doesn't give up her testimony because of this violence. You see that among so many of these early women who are willing to sacrifice for the gospel and the building up of the temple, building up of the kingdom, they are willing to sacrifice for each other. They are willing to follow God's prophet and they're willing to be active participants in the building up of the kingdom of God. In the lesson, in the Voice of the Restoration manual, you have this very eloquent address that comes from Eliza R. Snow. When the Relief Society's reconstituted in Utah--After Joseph's murder, the Relief Society's gonna effectively stop meeting and it's gonna be disbanded for a while. Then the saints are gonna leave and that's a whole process in and of itself. When they get to Utah, things aren't exactly wonderful.

01:02:46 You have almost immediately federal opposition. You have the army marching on Utah, then you have the American Civil War itself, which is all other kinds of chaos. During that time, women in Utah are still following the principles of the Relief Society and there are multiple independent wards that constitute their own individual relief societies. Well, in the aftermath of the Civil War, Brigham Young feels inspired to say that, look, we need to reconstitute and recreate this general Relief Society. We need the Relief Society built back up again the way that it was in 1867. He's going to give a whole sermon where he is talking about how the bishops are supposed to take care of the poor. How are we gonna do it? I can't read the whole sermon. I don't need it to be any more boring than I've already been but, he's talking about what we need to do to take care of the poor.

- 01:03:47 Brigham was very adamant about the fact that if you don't take care of the poor, then you aren't really a Mormon. A Latter-day Saint takes care of people that are suffering. He tells them all the different kinds of things he can do. Then this is what he says. Now, bishops, you have smart women for wives. Let them organize female relief societies in the various wards. We have many talented women among us and we wish their help in this matter, this matter of taking care of the poor and the people that are suffering. Some may think this is a trifling thing, but it is not. And you'll find that the sisters will be the mainspring of the movement. They will find rooms for the poor. They will obtain means for supporting them 10 times quicker than a bishop could if he should go or send a man for a donation.
- 01:04:46 If that person thus visited should happen to be cross or out of temper for some cause, the likelihood is that while in that state of feeling, he would refuse to give anything. And so, a variety of causes would operate to render the mission an unsuccessful one, but let a sister appeal for the relief of suffering and poverty and she is almost sure to be successful. If you take this counsel, you'll relieve the wants of the poor, a great deal better than they're dealt with. Now we recommend these female relief societies to be organized immediately. A lot of local wards had already reestablished their own, but many of them hadn't. They were independent. They didn't have a general Relief Society yet. Now in Nauvoo it was easy. Everyone's already living in Nauvoo. They actually did find that they had so many women who wanted to attend the meetings that they did have to divide the group up into four different meetings that they would have.
- 01:05:45 But there wasn't this division on like a ward level, like the 11th Ward Relief Society and the 12th Ward. But in Utah, as these different wards are formed, you do have in the 1850s some wards establishing their own independent Relief Society where they were doing the same thing. Here Brigham on a general level in general conference essentially, I don't know if you wanna say he's chastising the bishops, but I'm guessing if I was a bishop that hadn't yet reconstituted a Relief Society in my ward, I would feel somewhat chastised. Essentially, what are you doing? You have all of these women who have the ability to do these great things and you're not utilizing their talents. Get on it. Eliza R. Snow is going to become the new leader of the reconstituted General Relief society. And again, she brings with her this experience from its origination, a wealth of experience in crossing the planes and in helping people.
- 01:06:48 So when she speaks, she's able to talk to both the brothers and sisters in a way about the Relief Society that so few people can.

What you have in the Voices of the Restoration manual, in the lesson. is one of her--I mean she has dozens of addresses, but part of one of her addresses where she's talking about this. I don't know. Hank, do you wanna read under the Eliza R. Snow section heading in the manual where it starts, "Although the name [Relief Society] may be of modern date", because remember they had a big, they had a big argument about the name of the Relief Society. So, it's kind of funny that she goes there. I was there for that discussion. And go ahead.

John Bytheway: 01:07:24 Alright, so this is Eliza R. Snow. What year is this again? Gerrit?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:07:27 In 1868.

Hank Smith: 01:07:28 She says, "Although the name [Relief Society] may be of modern date, the institution is of ancient origin. We were told by [Joseph Smith], that the same organization existed in the church anciently, allusions to which are made in some of the epistles recorded in the New Testament, making use of the title, 'elect lady.' This is an organization that cannot exist without the Priesthood, from the fact that it derives all its authority and influence from that source. When the Priesthood was taken from the earth, this institution as well as every other appendage of the true order of the church of Jesus Christ on the earth, became extinct... Having been present at the organization of the 'Female Relief Society of Nauvoo'... also having had considerable experience in that association, perhaps I may communicate a few hints that will assist the daughters of Zion in stepping forth in this very important position, which is replete with new and multiplied responsibilities.

01:08:23 If any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are feeling in the least circumscribed in their present spheres, they will now find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed...Should the question arise in the mind, of any, What is the object of the Female Relief society? I would reply--to do good--to bring into requisition every capacity we possess for doing good, not only in relieving the poor, but in saving souls. United effort will accomplish incalculably more than can be accomplished by the most effective individual energies... In administering to the poor, the female Relief society has other duties to perform than merely relieving bodily wants. Poverty of mind and sickness of heart, also demand attention; and many times a kind expression--a few words of counsel, or even a warm and affectionate shake of the hand will do more good and better and be better appreciated than a purse of gold...

	01:09:22	When the saints gather from abroad, strangers to everybody, and subject to be led astray by those who lie in wait to deceive, the [Relief] Society should be prompt in looking after [them], and introduce them into the society that will refine and elevate, and above all strengthen them in the faith of the Gospel, and in so doing, may be instrumental in saving many. It would require volumes in which to define the duties, privileges and responsibilities that come within the purview of the Society...Go at it (under the direction of your bishop) coolly deliberately, energetically, unitedly and prayerfully and God will crown your efforts with success." Wow.
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:10:05	Amazing. She is so inspired in the way she teaches and has the ability to cut to the quick with her words. So well that what better way to describe it? I mean, there are times that an affectionate handshake is more valuable than money. Someone feeling loved matters more than anything you could provide them. I also love the fact that, look, if we care about this, if we care about the kingdom, then put all your efforts into this. You're gonna be blessed for it. If you're thinking, as she said, you might feel circumscribed in your position, meaning, well, I'm just a woman in 19th century America, how could I possibly have any effect? Well, here's the way that you can have an effect. If you do it, all of your faculties are gonna be used and it's going to make a difference.
John Bytheway:	01:10:54	I see the reference for that as Deseret News, but was that a live address of some sort in a conference or something?
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:11:03	It's at an annual gathering of the Relief Society itself, I believe.
John Bytheway:	01:11:07	When did we start having a General Relief Society Presidency and was this part of the reconstitution? So, there weren't individual independent ward Relief Societies?
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:11:19	It's a good question because the reality is that she's functioning as a General Relief Society President essentially before it becomes the office. Clearly Brigham Young has placed Eliza R. Snow in charge of trying to go around and make sure every ward creates its own Relief Society and to help teach them and regulate them. It's not really formalized as the General Relief Society Presidency until 1880. That's when she's called to that position. Along with Zina Huntington Young and with Elizabeth Ann Whitney. Again, all members of this original Relief Society, two of them, members of the original presidency that are now part of this reconstitute. But they were already functionally operating as that anyway, but they hadn't set it aside. In Illinois, you didn't have need for a General Relief Society Presidency

because there was just the organization. They don't have branches of the Relief Society in Michigan in 1842.

01:12:30 They're certainly appealing to people in those various places. But the Relief Society meets and functions in Nauvoo. In Utah, you have a different issue, because functionally you have members of the church that are literally thousands of miles away from one another. By 1880, you've got members of the church down in Arizona and members of the church in Canada and you've got them everywhere. You're going to need something different than just one organization. You need kind of a general body to oversee the individual ward organizations. Really from 1867 on Eliza R. Snow and others are helping organize these in other wards, others are doing it too. I mean, if you read Wilfred Woodruff's journals in the 1850s, he and Phoebe Woodruff visit a ward and Phoebe tells them that they need to reorganize the Relief Society. It's something that's going on at a local level at various wards in Utah.

01:13:31 I don't know if Brigham Young thinks that that is not happening organically fast enough or what, but by 1867 he's essentially chastising bishops for not doing it faster, for not adopting it faster. And so, after that, Eliza R. Snow takes this lead of helping these places create the organization. Then they formalize the position in 1880. When you say, well, when was the second Relief Society Presidency founded? It's like, well, I guess if you want to be super technical, you say 1880. But her and her counselors were functioning effectively in that position earlier. So I, you know..

John Bytheway: 01:14:07 Interesting. I wonder, and I forgive my ignorance on, might have to delete it if I sound really, really...

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:14:14 Hey look, if we're just deleting ignorance, then we get to delete the whole thing. Voices of the Restoration is gone.

John Bytheway: 01:14:19 Voices of ignorance. Yeah. I was just wondering, is there a biography of Eliza R. Snow?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:14:26 The church has done a lot with Eliza R. Snow's teachings. You can access many of them on the church history library. There also have been multiple biographies written about her. She is, like I said, this indispensable woman of Latter-day Saint history. If you go to the church History library website, you can find many of her discourses, many of the things she has to say, many of them have actually been published in these books that are collected sermons of female leaders of the church. On the church's website, you can actually access many of these

sermons and there's a book that was published called At the Pulpit, 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women. This is a treasure trove of insights into how they deal with things, and at least to me is a huge buoy to my faith and my ability to make it through difficult times.

01:15:25 When I read the faith and testimonies of these women, it is something that says to me, okay, yeah, things are difficult, but they're not that difficult, are they? And it helps me re-center myself. They're clearly receiving inspiration from God as they deliver these things. And so many efforts have been taken to make the voices of these women, which I'm guessing many of us haven't read, to make them searchable and accessible to us so that we can understand our past and thereby better understand our present and hopefully do better in the future. I would really urge everyone to take advantage of the resources that the church has put in place for us to study these powerful testimonies of these women who came before us.

John Bytheway: 01:16:13 We started with a brief mention of Section 25 where Emma, a woman in the early 19th century is told to exhort and expound in the position of a teacher, which is, so that's out of...

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:16:30 It's generally rare even for a school teacher. Could you find women that served in the role of school? Because when we think of the 19th century and jobs that women could be in, we generally have on our minds the Little House on the Prairie, mid to late 19th century is the idea that we've created for ourselves. But things like the secretarial pool, that's at the very end of the 19th century, at the beginning of the 20th century, there's a reason why the term secretary was considered a very prominent idea, a prominent position. It's the reason why you have a Secretary of the Interior. I mean, today you might think of things like a secretary. So, he's, we have a different idea of those terminologies. The fact that she's called to be a scribe, that she's called to write for Joseph, that is very much outside of the culture she lives in.

01:17:31 You can go look and find the secretaries of every great political leader. Every single one of them are men because that's what society dictated at the time. I'm sure you could find some exception where it's not the case, but it is very few and far between that the secretary role was always filled by an educated man. Here, the Lord has Emma fill this role of scribe, a person writing down revelations. Then as you said, teaching. Now, there are some Christian sects at the time that certainly have women that are teaching and that are giving sermons, but it is not the norm and it is generally considered outside of what

is mainline Christianity at the time. It's what leads to some of the schisms of churches in fact. Part of the reason why Anne Hutchinson leaves the Massachusetts Bay Colony and goes to Connecticut is because she's trying to do Bible study outside of what the accepted ideas of women's role in the church are in the Congregationalist church at the time. It's not unique. Shakers have female preachers, Quakers have women speak in their meetings. There certainly are female preachers and women who are expounding the gospel, but it is not even close to the norm. It is generally not the case that you would have a woman told that she's going to be a teacher to the church. There is no doubt to anybody living in Utah territory in the 1860s that Brigham Young is giving Eliza R. Snow the green light to preach and preach and preach.

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| John Bytheway: | 01:19:13 | It's a good decision too, from what we've read from Eliza R. Snow. Yeah. |
| Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 01:19:18 | She's amazing. If you go to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, it's a private library. In their collection, they have a whole bunch of Latter-day Saint items, which is, frankly, it's somewhat frustrating. It's like, you know these, I wish were not donated to you, but to the Church History Library. But one of the things they have is they have Eliza R. Snow's journal that she keeps while she's crossing the plains. It's her plains journal and it's this little teeny book. In fact, it's this little book that, that my hand's bigger than the book is. It's her recording her daily difficulties and struggles and she's in a company, the guy leading their company, he's not very kind and he refuses to listen to counsel and he's kind of mean, you can tell she's struggling with it. You can tell that she's not happy with it, but it doesn't affect her faith at all. |
| | 01:20:17 | Because her faith is in the fact that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, that Brigham Young's a prophet. We don't have to allow the fact that everyone who's a member of the church will at some point encounter someone who's in a position of leadership who may not always make the right decisions, who may not always be the kindest in their words, who may speak before they understand the situation. I know I've been in those situations. With an unpaid clergy, you get what you pay for. The reality is we're all a bunch of sinners trying to figure out our way through life and we make mistakes. I know every time I've been in any leadership position--which is very few because the church learns from its mistakes--that I've made mistakes that I have done and said things that upon reflection I'm like, oh my goodness. |

01:21:17 Eliza experiences that crossing the plains and you could tell she is not happy with the way she's being treated, but it doesn't affect her faith because the temporal circumstances that you're in, the temporary leadership that you have, God is well aware that people aren't perfect. He created a church that would be run by a lay ministry, not professional ministers. The woman teaching my Sunday school class isn't teaching it because she went and got a Ph.D. in Greek New Testament. No doubt someone listening does have a woman teaching their class who does have a Ph.D. in in Greek New Testament. But she's teaching it because she's a believer and the Holy Spirit is going to help her give that message. So, I hope we give grace to our local leaders in the sense that of course they're not perfect at what they do. How could they possibly be? At the same time, that's the great beauty of this church, that the local Relief Society president might be a stay at home mom one minute, and the next presidency might be a full professor at BYU, and then the next minute might be a woman who runs a part-time business out of her home.

01:22:36 I mean, God takes all of us and he utilizes all of our abilities at various ways and at times we step on each other's toes. At times, we make mistakes because we're all imperfect and we're all sinners. But the fact that individuals around us sin and offend us should never impact whether or not Joseph Smith saw God. Because, Joseph Smith either saw God or he did not. If he saw God, then whether my bishop is mean to me or not actually has no bearing on whether or not Joseph Smith saw God. It is frustrating. It is difficult. I don't mean to make light of it. I have absolutely experienced situations in which people in local authority misused and abused their power, against me directly, personally, in ways that harmed my family.

01:23:40 And that was hard and it was very difficult and it was unfair and it was wrong. And Joseph Smith still saw God. Hopefully as we navigate through this difficult mortality, we never lose sight of that. That maybe my Elder's Quorum President is a little rude to me when he tells me I need to help out more with cleaning the church. And yeah, maybe I take that the wrong way and maybe he could have been nicer and maybe he doesn't realize what I'm going through. But Joseph Smith still saw God. The keys of the kingdom are still here. If I want to have my family sealed to me for eternity, where else will I go? This is the kingdom of God on Earth. It's not perfect, yet, because Jesus isn't here. You don't have to look very far around to see how imperfect it is. It's imperfections, not withstanding, it's the organization that Jesus created. Our goal is to build it up like those early sisters in any way that we possibly can. Even though there's slights, even

though there's differences. Even though there's difficulties. because the end game is this is the kingdom of God on earth and that's what we have to keep sight of.

John Bytheway: 01:25:04 Well this has been great. We've heard from Lucy Mack Smith, Emma Smith, Sarah Granger Kimball, Sarah Cleveland, and Eliza R. Snow. Some great Voices of the Restoration.

Hank Smith: 01:25:19 The whole thing it's inspiring, one to watch them, to watch Joseph interact with these sisters and the way he interacted with them and then to see their leadership and the way they took off. It's really impressive and it's just inspiring. Makes you want to go do something.

John Bytheway: 01:25:36 It's never stopped. We've all been blessed by that today in our families. Our wives have been blessed by it.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:25:44 Absolutely. It's still going on. I mean, I watched my wife when she was a Relief Society president. I legitimately watched her receive revelation. There is no other way that you can describe it. Dealing with a difficult situation, she asked me for my opinion. I give her obviously terrible advice because I was the one giving it, I'm sure at the time. I thought it was really good. And she thinks about it. She ponders on it. She prays. She comes back with a completely different answer. And it's 100% exactly right what she needed to do. The women serving in these positions, they are given the authority to receive revelation for their organizations. And when you watch it happen, you know that it's from God. It is not what someone thought up on their own. It is, God gives them that access to receive revelation to help those that they are affecting. It's not just women, it's men, women and children who are benefited by the actions of the Relief Society today.

John Bytheway: 01:26:49 Probably the largest women's organization in the world.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:26:53 It's hard to conceive of one that's bigger.

John Bytheway: 01:26:56 Right.

Hank Smith: 01:26:56 Right. John, we only have Gerrit one more time. I hate to see this come to an end.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:27:02 I assume that that means they're never going to have me back when we get to Old Testament, which is a wise business decision.

Hank Smith:	01:27:11	Yeah. We have one more on Baptisms for the Dead, I believe.
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:27:15	Yes. I'm excited about that.
John Bytheway:	01:27:18	Thank you Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat for joining us today. Remember his podcast, Standard of Truth, if you wanna hear more of this. He's brilliant, he's passionate, he's fun. I love these times when we get to talk to Gerrit. And on a personal note, one time I was driving home from someplace, I called at a terrible hour, and Gerrit, we spent a half an hour on the phone. You helped me.
Hank Smith:	01:27:43	So great.
John Bytheway:	01:27:43	And we were laughing and everything and I thought, man, I love that guy. So, he just dropped everything...
Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:27:47	Oh you're very kind.
John Bytheway:	01:27:48	...and helped me out. I love Dr. D. Dr. Dirkmaat. So, thank you again for joining us. We hope you see us and hear from us and our wonderful guests next week on followHIM.