

The Errand of Angels

Many of our Family Home Evenings were memorable to me as a mother, but one particular Monday night stands out.¹ I had prepared a lesson from the Book of Mormon about Nephi and his brothers. I wanted to emphasize the principle of obedience in such a way that my children would remember how important it is to keep the Lord's commandments. I hoped that they would also recognize the blessings associated with this gospel precept. That evening, however, I was the one who learned a valuable lesson.

My husband and I gathered our four young boys together in the family room. I sat on the couch and my boys sat cross-legged on the floor in front of me. I explained that Nephi demonstrated his obedience to both his father and to the Lord when he agreed to return to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates. Despite the difficulty and the distance, Nephi declares, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded" (1 Nephi 3:7). With only a minimum of tussling, my children sat quietly as I told them this story.

Next, I explained that after several attempts to accomplish their purpose, the brothers had to flee Laban's house without the gold and silver that they brought from their home. They had neither the plates nor their worldly wealth, and they were angry. Blaming their father and their brother, the scriptures say that Laman and Lemuel were speaking harshly to Nephi and Sam, and then they began to smite them with a rod.

Now I had my family's full attention! What happened when the older boys were hitting their younger brothers? "An angel of the Lord came and stood before them, and he spake unto them saying: Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod?" (1 Nephi 3:29). At that moment the similarities between those four sons of Lehi, and my four sons, became a little more apparent. I turned to my husband who was sitting next to me and quietly said, "Sometimes I wish an angel would come down here and stop the fighting."

Before my husband could respond, my eight-year-old son, Clark, said to me, "Mom, you're the angel."

"Me, an angel?" I wondered. I didn't feel like one. But then I asked myself, "What work do angels perform?" Among other responsibilities, angels are messengers from the Lord, and they minister to His children. Surely, these definitions bear a close resemblance to the lives of righteous women and their good works. Women have opportunities to teach, nurture, and care for Heavenly Father's children. I felt touched and inspired by my son's comment.

Now, whenever I sing the second verse of "As Sisters in Zion" these words emphasize for me the significance of my experience: "The errand of angels is given to women; And this is a gift that as sisters, we claim: To do whatsoever is gentle and human, To cheer and to bless in humanity's name."²

¹ See original publication: Gail H. Johnsen, "The Errand of Angels" *Deseret News*, July 10, 2011.

² "As Sisters in Zion," *Hymns*, no. 309.

President James E. Faust cemented this concept for me when he said, “May you have an eternal perspective as you go about your angelic cause of doing good so that it will not only lead you to become great women but ultimately to become queens in the eternities.”³

This was a small but miraculous moment in my life. I was reminded of the importance of my role as a mother and also my opportunities as a woman in Zion. I know that it is a privilege to be able to bless my Heavenly Father’s children throughout my life.

³ James A. Faust, “How Near to the Angels,” *New Era*, March 1999.