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LET US WALK IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD

By Katherine Padilla

This script was adapted from a program that was presented on September 26, 1998 at the Frederick Maryland Stake Relief Society Women's Conference.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wrote this program in cooperation with the Relief Society presidency in my stake and did not choose the music that was performed. In this script, the first song listed is the one that was originally presented. Since several of these songs are not hymns and may not be available to you, I have chosen applicable hymns and listed them in parentheses.

“Let Us Walk in the Light of the Lord” was originally performed in the full-sized gymnasium of my stake center. In the middle of the gym stood a large model of the Washington, D.C. Temple. Surrounding the temple were the round tables at which the spectators were seated. Each corner of the room was decorated to represent a particular area of our lives—personal, family, service, and priesthood blessings. Two women, one scriptural and one modern, were chosen to represent a particular area. The actresses dressed in costume and presented their parts from the corners of the gym. During the final song, after all of the parts had been spoken, the actresses, one or two at a time, wound through the tables and approached the temple in an attitude of worship, then took seats in the audience.

INTRODUCTION

The program you will see tonight dramatizes the lives of eight real women. In the autobiography of Maria, names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of the woman represented. Kathy is the author of the program. Mary is her mother, and Hannah is her ancestor. The other four women depicted are scriptural persons, and we invite you to look up the references contained in your program for the factual accounts.

Song: "Come Follow Me," Hymn 116.

PERSONAL

MARY

I am Mary. When the angel Gabriel first appeared to me, I was troubled and afraid. I felt so young and insignificant, and I did not understand why an angel would want to visit me. When he explained that I had found such favor with God that I had been chosen to be the mother of the Son of God, I was astonished. The Holy Ghost filled my heart. I knew what the angel proclaimed would truly come to pass and that God was, indeed, giving me a great honor by so choosing me.

I had faith that God would watch over me and help me with this tremendous responsibility, but I felt so unprepared, both emotionally and spiritually. Not only that, but I was perplexed as to how I would tell others about this marvelous thing that would happen to me. Would they rejoice with me or scorn me? How would I react?

Desperately needing time to ponder the angel's words and prepare myself for what was to come, I traveled with haste to the home of my kinswoman Elizabeth, who, the angel had informed me, was with child in her old age. I greeted Elizabeth in gladness and relief.

When Elizabeth saw me, she cried out in a loud voice, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother

of my Lord should come to me? For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.”

My eyes filled with tears and my heart filled with joy. Elizabeth’s love and spiritual support was what I needed! I replied, “My soul doth magnify the Lord.”

I remained with Elizabeth for three months. When I returned to Nazareth, I felt as if I truly could fulfill the Father’s trust in me and be the mother of His Holy Son.

MARY

My name is Mary. I woke up early that Saturday morning in June feeling excited and happy. Kathy and Steve had arrived the evening before with the kids and were planning to baptize Christina that morning. I couldn’t wait to give Christina the cute little baptismal coloring book I had found. I felt a twinge of worry. Would Rachel be upset when she found out she would have to wait two years for her coloring book?

As I finished getting ready to go, a terrible thud sounded from the shower. Even before I could open the shower door, I saw that Gene, my husband, had fallen. Panic rose within me as I realized he was unconscious. I ran into the hallway, crying out to my son-in-law for help. I was so upset, I couldn’t think straight. My one good eye was blurry, and I could barely see. I didn’t know what to do. I prayed that Gene would be all right. Steve pulled Gene out of the shower and began giving him CPR. Even now, I thank Heavenly Father that Steve was there. I could never have pulled Gene out of that shower by myself. Kathy sat down with me on the bed. Terri, who was also visiting with her children, called 911.

The paramedics arrived in an instant, it seemed. They told us that Gene had had a heart attack. An hour later, I found out that he was dead. Dead! At age 53. As heartsick as I was, however, I felt very blessed. Steve and Kathy had not visited in many years, yet they were there when I needed them the most. Had they not been visiting, Terri would not have been there that morning either. I felt very humbled to realize the Lord loves me so much that He made sure my son-in-law and two of my daughters were with me the morning Gene died. I don’t know how I would have made it through that horrible morning without them.

My family gathered around me for a short time, and the members of my ward embraced me with their love and support. Eventually, however, I had to move forward on my own. What was I going to do? Gene had always loved me so much and had taken such good care of me. For 34 years, he had been my best friend. How could I go on without him?

Gene left me well off financially, but I struggled with government bureaucracy for many weeks before I actually began receiving the insurance money. In the process, I gained an ability to assert myself that I had never had before.

Not wanting to be dependent on anyone, I found out that I could get a driver's license, despite the fact that I'm blind in one eye. (I shocked my family with this information, I'm sure!) I can't drive when my good eye is blurry, of course, but at least I have the freedom to get out on my own occasionally.

Once I finally did get Gene's insurance money, I avoided investing it for many months. I didn't know anything about investments, so I took a class. In a matter as important as this, I didn't want to take the chance that I would make a terrible mistake out of ignorance.

Along with the investments' class, I began taking Institute classes at the church. This was an exciting thing for me. All of my children had gone to early morning seminary and had taken religion classes in college, but between joining the Church as a mom with small children, serving in callings, and working, this was the first time I had felt free to take those religion classes myself. I'm learning so much, and I absolutely love them!

I have spent some of the insurance money redecorating my home. Gene and I had wanted to do a lot of this work for a long time. I can't tell you how much it lifts my spirits to look around and see the new carpet and the freshly painted walls. I took down all of the heavy old drapes and put up blinds. Now my home is full of light, and I can see so much better.

My dear friend Florence bent over backwards to spend time with me during those early days without Gene. She and her husband were in charge of the Single Adults program in my stake, and she encouraged me to attend the firesides held for the singles on Sunday evenings. I was reluctant at first, but eventually I got to the point where I

didn't miss a fireside.

I made many new friends among the single sisters in my stake, neat women I've come to love and admire. One friend in particular, Joyce, looked for ways to help me. There were days when I was so overwhelmed by loneliness that I would kneel by my bed crying and not be able to get up. I would pray with all my heart to the Lord to ease my loneliness. Sometimes one of my daughters would call. More often, though, Joyce would call or stop by. She is so good to me. Whenever I have a bad day, I think of her and all she's been through. As Joyce reaches out to me, I can't help but reach out to her.

It's taking time, but my emotional and spiritual strength is returning. I take great comfort in these words from Jesus to his apostles: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Song: "Look Inside," by Julie S. Anderson and Dennis L. Crockett, published in A Song of the Heart.

("Where Can I Turn for Peace?" Hymn 129.)

FAMILY

EVE

I am Eve. Adam and I took very seriously our Father's command to multiply and replenish the earth. We knew that there were multitudes of pure and holy spirits waiting to receive bodies, and from the beginning, we determined to do everything in our power to bring as many of those spirits as possible into the world and teach them the plan of redemption. Bearing and rearing children became the focus of our life.

As the decades passed, however, I often became frustrated as I watched most of my children choose to follow Satan instead of God. I often felt as if my life was being wasted. I had spent so many decades caring for my children and teaching them to worship God. Why work so hard to multiply and replenish the earth when your children and grandchildren seek only wickedness and destruction?

Despite the sorrow I sometimes felt, I persevered in my mission to bring souls into the world. I knew that there would be many righteous followers of Christ among our descendants, and I rejoiced in the eternal life which God would give to all those who would be obedient. Adam and I continued to bring children into our family, begging our Father to bless us with a righteous seed so that we could begin seeing the fulfillment of His promises to us. Finally, after 130 years, Seth was born.

Many centuries passed of bearing and teaching children. Most chose to worship Satan, and my heart ached for them as I watched them experience the consequences of their unrighteous choices. Even as I mourned the loss of so many, my heart rejoiced as our righteous posterity began spreading throughout the earth. The frustrations of my early years left me, and I savored all the more the joy of communing with my faithful sons and daughters.

Even now, I look out upon all of you, my righteous daughters—my eternal treasures—and I praise God and am glad!

KATHY

My name is Kathy. Many years ago, when I only had two little boys and a baby girl, I stood in line behind a woman at the grocery store who admired my baby and said, “Isn’t it nice you got a girl for your last one?” I cheerfully replied, “It’s nice I got a girl, but I doubt she’ll be my last.” That comment shocked the woman into silence.

Since then, every time we’ve added a new baby to our family, someone has inevitably asked, “Was this baby planned?” I’m often told I’m insane, and I’m just as often told that I’m a saint. (Ha!) It’s as if no one these days believes that an intelligent, sane woman could actually *want* to have six children or maybe even more.

Not too long ago, I read an article in the newspaper about the problems facing many of the developing countries around the world. This article attributed many of the problems to overpopulation and cited ways in which the population issue is being addressed. The article talked about the grim, hopeless condition of the countless women who have baby after baby, with no hope of a better life for themselves or their children. The answer, the article said, was education and contraception. The better educated the

women are and the fewer children they have, the more opportunities they have to make something of themselves and lead successful lives. The president of a population control organization gave a statement to this effect, “Once a woman gets an eighth grade education, she won’t allow herself to become a baby factory.”

I’ve thought about this article a lot. What I’ve wondered about most is whether women who have large families really do think of themselves as “baby factories.” I certainly don’t think of myself in this demeaning way, but I only have six children, and I did have a choice. What about those women who have ten or more children and didn’t have a choice? Are these women all miserable and unfulfilled?

I can’t help but think of many of my ancestors. Hannah Lewis, who was born in 1766 and spent much of her adult life in the new state of Kentucky, had fifteen children. Hannah’s eldest son was married twice. His second wife, Eleanor, my ancestor, raised the five children from his first marriage and had fourteen children of her own. Were these women happy? I want to believe they were. I want to believe they took pleasure knowing they were doing their part to build a new state and a young country. I do know that both of these women lived to a ripe old age. Having lots of children didn’t send either one of them to an early grave.

My grandmother often talks about her grandparents, John and Isabell Lewis. John Lewis would have been Hannah Lewis’s great grandson. John Lewis was eighteen years old when he married sixteen-year-old Isabell. He was a farmer and they were very poor. They and their eight children moved from Kentucky to Kansas in the early 1900s and established a farm outside of Topeka. They raised my grandmother, and even now, she has nothing but pleasant memories of her life on the farm. She remembers her grandmother hugging her and her grandfather reading aloud from the Bible every day. Through all of the stories my grandmother tells about her childhood, one thing has become clear: despite their humble lifestyle, John and Isabell Lewis loved each other and were happy.

I have to ask myself: What can I learn from these women? How can their experiences raising large families help me take more joy in my role as a mother? How did they do it?

Obviously, these women worked hard. I have to believe they took pleasure in

seeing a job well done. What more does a person need to feel successful? After all, work is work, whether it's done in the home or the office. Looking at the lives of my ancestors, I know that I'll be happier in my job as homemaker if I discard my negative feelings about housework and learn to take more pleasure in good hard work.

Hannah, Eleanor, and Isabell not only worked hard, they led very simple lives. Their lives weren't cluttered with a lot of unnecessary activities and material possessions. Their homes were probably very small, perhaps even smaller than mine is. They didn't have the luxury many mothers do now of raising their families with lots of indoor space, but perhaps having larger homes would have just added to their already large workloads. I've come to think of my moderate-sized home as a blessing. If I had a large house, I would be spending a lot more time cleaning and considerably more money paying a larger mortgage, more taxes, and higher utility bills. I'd probably also be spending more money on furniture. As I work to simplify my life, I'll have more time to spend with my children, in Church service, and in personal pursuits.

Perhaps the greatest factor in determining whether Hannah, Eleanor, and Isabell were happy was that they looked at their work in their homes and with their families as their life's work, their "career" so to speak. With this attitude, they would have felt free to devote all of their intelligence, energy, and talents to making their home life the best it could be. From their example, I know that I'll be happier and more fulfilled if I use my best energy and talents in motherhood instead of reserving them for the pursuits the world thinks are important.

As I look at the lives of Hannah, Eleanor, and Isabell and all of my other great, great grandmothers, my heart goes out to them. I admire their accomplishments and am grateful to them for the part they all played in making me who I am. I certainly don't think they wasted their lives. I'm anxious to meet them someday. Come to think of it, I'm anxious to meet *my* great, great granddaughters. I'm beginning to feel the happiness the Lord described in reference to Emma Smith when He said: ". . . and I, the Lord thy God, will bless her, and multiply her, and make her heart to rejoice."

*Song: "My Mother/My Daughter," by Janice Kapp Perry and Joy Saunders Lundberg.
("From Homes of Saints Glad Songs Arise," Hymn 297.)*

SERVICE

WOMAN OF AMMON

My place is among the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. Our brethren cannot understand our great faith in Christ and regard us as traitors. In the hardness of their hearts, they have sought many times to kill us. Perhaps it would be natural for us to hate them in return, but we cannot. We were, after all, just like them not so long ago. We were in the darkest abyss, the most lost of all mankind, murdering our brethren with as little thought as we killed wild beasts. The Lord has purged all desires for retribution and murder from our beings. He has washed away our many murders and made us bright with His blood! Oh, how merciful is our God!

We have made a covenant to die ourselves rather than to lift our hands to slay another human being. More than a thousand of my people died because they would not fight. Because of their faithfulness in keeping their covenant, however, many of our brethren softened their hearts and came to a knowledge of the truth. What a glorious day that was! In fact, more repented and accepted Christ as their Redeemer than died in the battle!

Some time later, the Amalekites, in their anger, came up to battle against us. My people again refused to take up arms and suffered themselves to be slain. The Amalekites were without mercy. We mourn for them, those rebellious, lost souls. They continued the slaughter until Ammon persuaded our king to remove our people to the Land of Zarahemla.

I was relieved to learn the killing would stop but afraid that the Nephites would destroy us because of the many murders and sins we have committed against them. To our great astonishment and joy, the Nephites gave us the land of Jershon to have as an inheritance. Not only that, but they have agreed to guard our land with their armies. All we have to do is give them a portion of our substance. This is an exceeding act of mercy that we can never repay.

Not long after we were given the land of Jershon, the Zoramites cast many of the humble believers of Christ out of their land. Those people came to us for refuge, and we

took them in. Those poor people were so full of grief and needed so much that our hearts were filled with compassion for them. We nourished them, clothed them, gave them lands for their inheritance, and administered unto them according to their wants.

The chief ruler of the Zoramites was angry with us and desired that we should cast these Zoramite refugees out of our land. He breathed out many threats against us, but we did not heed his words. After all, what was there to fear? Men could kill us, but Christ had promised us a glorious resurrection. So long as we lived, we would succor every suffering soul who came to dwell among us.

MARIA

My name is Maria, and I was born in Mexico. Life was hard there. I worked in the fields from the time I was a girl. After I was married, I came to America with my husband. There was not enough work in Mexico, or enough money. We worked in the fields for many years.

Then came the chance for my husband to work for a bank. We were so happy! We did not have to work in the fields anymore. One night while my husband was doing his work, he was shot.

Why did this happen? I did not know what to do! I was hurt and frightened. The Lord came to me in a dream and told me everything would be fine. He was white and shining, and He made me feel better. I did not want Him to leave.

After that, I moved to a different state with my five children to be near my brother. I have very little money, and I cannot work. My children are still so young. I cannot leave them to work in the fields, and since I cannot speak English or read, I cannot get a better job. I do make tortillas for people when I can. I hate to ask for help, but I do get help from the state and from the Church and sometimes from my brother. I feel blessed that my children can go to school and get an American education and one good meal a day.

When I first started going to Church in this new town, hardly anyone here could speak Spanish. I could not understand what was said in the meetings, but the Spirit was so strong. I knew it was where the Lord wanted me to be. I feel so blessed that I do not

live too far away from the church—I only have to walk a half a mile.

I cannot understand most of my American brothers and sisters, but they are so kind to me. They gave me a tape player and tapes with the Book of Mormon in Spanish. They take my family to church sometimes and take me with them to the temple. It takes many hours to get to the temple, but I can understand it, and I think of my husband and the Savior.

After many months, a brother moved into the branch who can speak Spanish well enough to translate. I have to wear earphones now, but I can understand! I thank the Lord over and over for His goodness to me. Sometimes I can even bear my testimony. I feel uncomfortable standing in front of people with a man who is not my husband, but the love of my Savior burns so strong in my heart. I feel I must share my testimony with my American brothers and sisters.

Some of my American sisters are having many babies. I know how hard it is to have a new baby and other little children at home. I want so much to help them in some way, so I make dinner for them, enough so that they can have some left over. I worry that the food my family usually eats is not good enough for my American sisters, so I make the best of everything—whole pieces of spicy chicken, lots of spicy brown rice, refried beans, tortillas, hot sauce, and, of course, a big pan of rice pudding for dessert.

The new mother this time is *Hermana* Johnson. My son and I put the food in two big boxes and walk to her house on the other side of town. She meets us at the door in surprise. For a moment, I am worried that the food is not good enough. She cheerfully invites us in, and we set the boxes on her table. Then she hugs me and says, “*Gracias, Hermana Cortez.*” There are tears in her eyes. I smile and nod, happy she is pleased.

Hermana Johnson shows me her new baby. What a beautiful girl! And so large and healthy! “*Muy bonita niña,*” I say, touching the baby’s cheek. I speak slowly so that *Hermana* Johnson can learn the words.

“*Muy bonito niña,*” she says.

“No, no,” I say, shaking my head. That does not sound right. “*Muy bonita niña,*” I repeat.

“*Muy bonita niña,*” *Hermana* Johnson says, pleased.

“*Sí,*” I say, nodding. Very pretty girl!

*Song: "Have You Received His Image in Your Countenance?" by Janice Kapp Perry.
(Because I Have Been Given Much," Hymn 219.)*

PRIESTHOOD BLESSINGS

HANNAH

I am Hannah. For many years, the greatest desire of my heart was to have a child. Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, treated me cruelly, causing me a great deal of anxiety. I missed many meals and wept many tears, wondering why the Lord had forgotten me.

In this bitterness of soul, I went to the temple and prayed unto the Lord. My lips moved, but no words came forth, only sobs. I vowed to the Lord that if he would remember me and give me a man child, then I would give that child to the Lord all the days of his life.

I did not realize the priest Eli was before me until he said, "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee."

Wiping away my tears, I answered, "No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord."

Eli regarded me kindly and said, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him."

I left the temple feeling comforted. I knew that what Eli had promised would surely come to pass; the Lord would grant my petition! Shortly after Elkanah and I returned to Ramah, I conceived. I did indeed bear a son, and I called his name Samuel.

After Samuel was weaned, I took him to the temple and presented him to Eli with these words, "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

Every year when Elkanah and I went to the temple to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord, I brought Samuel a little coat. How I missed him! My heart filled with joy,

however, to see him growing into a young man of such holiness.

Eli blessed Elkanah and I with these words, “The Lord give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the Lord.” The Lord did indeed bless me with three more sons and two daughters. My heart no longer cries out to the Lord in sorrow, but in rejoicing.

HANNAH

My name is Hannah. I was born in New York in 1766. My family moved to Virginia, and there, as a young woman, I met Thomas. Thomas had served in the War, gathering information for the Colonial army, and would later go on two exploring expeditions with frontiersman George Rogers Clark. Thomas was a patriot and an explorer, and I admired his strong ideals and sense of adventure. We were married in Virginia in 1784 and shortly thereafter moved, with many members of my family, to the territory of Kentucky.

I was expecting my first child when we crossed the mountains. The trip was difficult, but well worth it! We felt as if we were entering the Garden of Eden itself. The land was unspoiled and beautiful, with huge trees, rich soil, and many clear rivers and streams. Game was plentiful, and we always had enough to eat. We moved several times before we finally settled in what was then Floyd County.

God blessed us abundantly. We had land of our own and fifteen beautiful children who all lived to adulthood. Thomas and I spent 45 years together with our family before he was laid to rest. I followed him three years later.

Thomas met me on the other side with information that was both good and bad. I was delighted to learn that he had found the true gospel of Jesus Christ. We had been church-going people all of our lives, but this was heartening news indeed. To join a Christian fellowship with real apostles, real prophets, and pure doctrine! It seemed too good to be true!

Then Thomas told me that we had to be baptized again, by the proper authority, and that according to the laws of the spirit world, we were not married. At first I did not believe it. How could that be? When we had spent most of our mortal lives together?

This place was not the paradise it had at first appeared to be; it was prison! How we yearned to be released from spiritual bondage! How we prayed to the Lord to cleanse us from darkness and bring us into His full Light! How we longed to unite our family and rejoice with our children and grandchildren!

Thomas reassured me with the reminder that we had fifteen children and many, many grandchildren—a huge posterity, all raised to be good Christians. Certainly some would join the Church when the opportunity came. Surely they would not forget about us!

One by one, we welcomed our children and grandchildren to the spirit world and taught them the gospel. Most of them accepted it and waited with us for the ordinance work to be done. The decades continued to trudge by, then a century. Our hopes rose when the Church found some of our names in the records of Kentucky through the extraction program. I was one of the first to have my work done in 1969.

Several members of my family also had their work done at that time. Slowly, a few of our great, great grandchildren began joining the Church. Some of those who did not join the Church were interested in learning about us and did a great deal of research. For this, we are all very grateful. The waiting ended for many more family members in 1982. Again, Thomas was missed.

When more names of our family members were taken to the temple in 1991 and Thomas was missed again, he began to despair. He was a Revolutionary War veteran and remembered by his country—the records were there for all to see—but his descendants had forgotten him. How could that be?

About that time, one of our Latter-day Saint descendants, Mary, received a great deal of information about us from a non-member descendant. Mary, however, was experiencing health problems and did not feel as if she could adequately complete the work at that time. She did pass the information on to her daughter Kathy, who lives near the Washington, D.C. Temple.

My heart filled with joy! Kathy had the information and the desire to do the temple work. All she had to do was submit the names. Kathy was afraid of genealogy work, though, and her fear caused her to hesitate. So many things distracted her energy and her thoughts. We waited for several more years, watching Kathy and her husband

take the names of people they did not know through the temple and still nothing was done for us. If only I could somehow make her see how important this was to me! How important it was to Thomas and our children!

Like Hannah of old, I pleaded for a blessing. I begged the Lord to influence Kathy to submit Thomas's name to the temple. I felt as if I were standing at the edge of a ravine, knowing Thomas was at the bottom, severely wounded. I could do nothing for him but call for help. I called and called, waiting for someone to come to his rescue. My cries became desperate. The wait was unbearable. I just could not see him in pain any longer.

Finally, in 1997, Kathy submitted the names. She felt strongly that many of us had accepted the gospel and were trying to gather our family. She saw that many of us had had our work done, but that some of us had been missed. She was shocked to learn that Thomas's ordinances had not been done. "How can that be?" she said to her husband. "How could this great patriarch have been missed? No wonder I've felt such an urge to get this work done."

Kathy's son was baptized for Thomas, and Kathy herself was baptized for my daughter-in-law Eleanor and several others. What a splendid day that was! Kathy encouraged her husband to take Thomas's name through for his endowment promptly, and we were sealed shortly thereafter.

Now, after two centuries of waiting, Thomas and I are finally married for all eternity. The shackles of darkness have fallen from us and we are filled with our Savior's Everlasting Light!

Song: "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," Hymn 315.

REFERENCES

MARY

Luke 1:26-56

EVE

Genesis 4: 25,26; 5:1-5; Moses 5: -17, 51-52, 55-59; 6:1-12; D&C 138:38-40

WOMAN OF AMMON

Alma 23-24; 25:13-14; 27; 35:1-11

HANNAH

1 Samuel 1; 2:1-11