

The Women of the Church

“Chapter 20: The Women of the Church,” *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 214–25

“I marvel at the faithfulness of so many of our sisters and their unswerving devotion to the cause of righteousness,” wrote President Spencer W. Kimball. He then related the following:

From the Life of Spencer W. Kimball

“My own wonderful mother’s journal records a lifetime of being grateful for the opportunity to serve and sorry only that she couldn’t do more. I smiled when I recently read one entry dated January 16, 1900. She was serving as first counselor in our Relief Society in Thatcher, Arizona, and the presidency went to a sister’s home where a sick baby had prevented the mother from doing her sewing. Mother took her machine, a picnic lunch, her baby, and a high chair, and they began work. She wrote that night, we ‘made four aprons, four pairs of pants and started a shirt for one of the boys.’ They had to stop at 4 p.m. to go to a funeral, so we ‘did not get any more than that done.’ I would have been impressed by such achievement, rather than thinking, ‘Well, that’s not much.’

“Then two days later, the Relief Society met in our home for a work meeting. ‘We had quite a turnout,’ wrote my mother, and ‘accomplished considerable.’ Then after that work meeting, she went uncomplainingly to a board meeting.

“That’s the kind of home I was born in, one conducted by a woman who breathed service in all her actions. That is the kind of home my wife has made. That is the kind of home that thousands of wonderful women all over the Church make.”¹

President Kimball taught the importance that all righteous women have in Heavenly Father’s plan for His children. He said: “Someday, when the whole story of this and previous dispensations is told, it will be filled with courageous stories of our women, of their wisdom and their devotion, their courage, for one senses that perhaps, just as women were the first at the sepulchre of the Lord [Jesus Christ](#) after his [resurrection](#), our righteous women have so often been instinctively sensitive to things of eternal consequence.”²

Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball

Having been given different responsibilities, women and men are to work together in a partnership of equality and respect.

The scriptures and the prophets have taught us clearly that God, who is perfect in his attribute of justice, “is no respecter of persons” ([Acts 10:34](#)). . . . We had full equality as his spirit children. We have equality as recipients of God’s perfected love for each of us. The late Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote:

“The place of woman in the Church is to walk beside the man, not in front of him nor behind him. In the Church there is full equality between man and woman. The gospel ... was devised by the Lord for men and women alike” (*Improvement Era*, Mar. 1942, p. 161).

Within those great assurances, however, our roles and assignments differ. These are eternal differences—with women being given many tremendous responsibilities of motherhood and sisterhood and men being given the tremendous responsibilities of fatherhood and the priesthood—but the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord (see [1 Cor. 11:11](#)). Both a righteous man and a righteous woman are a blessing to all those their lives touch.

Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to.³

Sometimes we hear disturbing reports about how sisters are treated. Perhaps when this happens, it is a result of insensitivity and thoughtlessness, but it should not be, brethren. The women of this Church have work to do which, though different, is equally as important as the work that we do. Their work is, in fact, the same basic work that we are asked to do—even though our roles and assignments differ. ...

Our sisters do not wish to be indulged or to be treated condescendingly; they desire to be respected and revered as our sisters and our equals. I mention all these things, my brethren, not because the doctrines or the teachings of the Church regarding women are in any doubt, but because in some situations our behavior is of doubtful quality.⁴

The Relief Society is the Lord’s organization for women. It complements the priesthood training given to the brethren. There is a power in this organization that has not yet been fully exercised to strengthen the homes of Zion and build the Kingdom of God. ...

... In his wisdom and mercy, our Father made men and women dependent on each other for the full flowering of their potential. Because their natures are somewhat different, they can complement each other; because they are in many ways alike, they can understand each other. Let neither envy the other for their differences; let both discern what is superficial and what is beautifully basic in those differences, and act accordingly. And may the brotherhood of the priesthood and the sisterhood of the Relief Society be a blessing in the lives of all the members of this great Church, as we help each other along the path to perfection.⁵

God has called women to help enrich, protect, and guard the home and family.

To be a righteous woman is a glorious thing in any age. To be a righteous woman during the winding up scenes on this earth, before the second coming of our Savior, is an especially noble calling. The righteous woman’s strength and influence today can be tenfold what it might be in more tranquil times. She has been placed here to help to enrich, to protect, and to guard the home—which is society’s basic and most noble institution. Other institutions in society may

falter and even fail, but the righteous woman can help to save the home, which may be the last and only sanctuary some mortals know in the midst of storm and strife.⁶

You read the papers, you watch television, you hear the radio, you read books and magazines, and much that comes to your consciousness is designed to lead you astray. ... Some of the things they are telling you these days are: it is not necessary to marry; it is not necessary to marry to have children; it is not necessary to have children; you may have all the worldly pleasures without these obligations and responsibilities. ... There are [many] ways to give you this loosely held, so-called freedom. They are telling you that you are manacled [chained] to your homes, to your husbands, to your children, to your housework. They are talking and writing to you about a freedom they know nothing about. ...

Eve, so recently from the eternal throne, seemed to understand the way of life, for she was happy—happy!—that they had eaten the forbidden fruit. ... Our beloved mother Eve began the human race with gladness, wanting children, glad for the joy that they would bring to her, willing to assume the problems connected with a family, but also the joys. ...

Mothers have a sacred role. They are partners with God, as well as with their own husbands, first in giving birth to the Lord's spirit children and then in rearing those children so they will serve the Lord and keep his commandments. ... Motherhood is a holy calling, a sacred dedication for carrying out the Lord's work, a consecration and devotion to the rearing and fostering, the nurturing of body, mind, and spirit of those who kept their first estate and who came to this earth for their second estate to learn and be tested and to work toward godhood.⁷

Too many women spend their time in socializing, in politicking, in public services when they should be home to teach and train and receive and love their children into security.⁸

No greater honor could be given to a woman than to assist in [God's] divine plan. I wish to say without equivocation that a woman will find no greater satisfaction and joy and peace and make no greater contribution to mankind than in being a wise and worthy woman and raising good children.⁹

The Lord has promised the blessings of eternal family life to all faithful women.

Some of you have lost your husbands through death, others through divorce. Some of you have not yet had the great privilege of marriage. But, on the scale of eternity, the missing of these blessings "shall be but a small moment" (see [D&C 121:7](#)). ...

Remember, too, as we focus on the glories and [importance of family](#) life here, that all of us belong to the eternal family of our Father in Heaven.

Be assured, too, that all faithful sisters, who, through no fault of their own, do not have the privilege during their second estate of being sealed to a worthy man, will have that blessing in eternity. On occasions when you ache for that acceptance and affection which belong to family life on earth, please know that our Father in Heaven is aware of your anguish, and that one day he will bless you beyond your capacity to express.

Sometimes to be tested and proved requires that we be temporarily deprived—but righteous women and men will one day receive *all*—think of it, sisters—*all* that our Father has! It is not only worth waiting for; it is worth living for!

Meanwhile, one does not need to be married or a mother in order to keep the first and second great commandments—those of loving God and our fellowmen—on which Jesus said hang all the law and all the prophets.¹⁰

Those of you who do not now experience the traditional woman's role, not by choice, but for reasons beyond control, can still do so much to help others.¹¹

Each woman should seek to fulfill her divine potential.

We delight and marvel in the appropriate development and expressions of our sisters' many talents.¹²

We encourage all our sisters to take advantage of their opportunities to receive light and knowledge in school, in personal study, and in Relief Society.¹³

You can set your goals, young women, to make you reach and strain. Keep striving for them. Be prayerful and humble in seeking wisdom and knowledge. You are in the time of your life for studying and preparing. Learn all you can. Growth comes from setting your goals high and reaching for the stars.¹⁴

Every girl, and I say every girl, should prepare herself for marriage and for domestic responsibilities. You are not reading that in the magazines today, but it's true nevertheless. She should be encouraged to be proud to prepare for true womanly service. She should become skilled in things that are useful and enriching to her family life. She should develop her talents, strengthen her knowledge and testimony of the gospel, and be eager to serve others. Some girls may be called on full-time missions, and all will have the opportunity to be highly useful in the kingdom of God if they prepare themselves. . . . We want our women to be well educated, for children may not recover from the ignorance of their mothers.¹⁵

We wish you to pursue and to achieve that education . . . which will fit you for eternity *as well as* for full service in mortality. In addition to those basic and vital skills which go with homemaking, there are other skills which can be appropriately cultivated and which will increase your effectiveness in the home, in the Church, and in the community.

Again, you must be wise in the choices that you make, but we do not desire the women of the Church to be uninformed or ineffective. You will be better mothers and wives, both in this life and in eternity, if you sharpen the skills you have been given and use the talents with which God has blessed you.¹⁶

We are interested in our sisters having everything that is good. We believe in having all these blessings—culture, refinement, education, knowledge, perfection—so that the mothers of our children may be able to rear and train them in righteousness.¹⁷

I stress again the deep need each woman has to study the scriptures. We want our homes to be blessed with sister scriptionists—whether you are single or married, young or old, widowed or living in a family.

Regardless of your particular circumstances, as you become more and more familiar with the truths of the scriptures, you will be more and more effective in keeping the second [great commandment](#), to love your neighbor as yourself. Become scholars of the scriptures—not to put others down, but to lift them up! After all, who has any greater need to “treasure up” the truths of the gospel (on which they may call in their moments of need) than do women and mothers who do so much nurturing and teaching?

Seek excellence in all your righteous endeavors, and in all aspects of your lives.

Bear in mind, dear sisters, that the eternal blessings which are yours through membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are far, far greater than any other blessings you could possibly receive. No greater recognition can come to you in this world than to be known as a woman of God. No greater status can be conferred upon you than being a daughter of God who experiences true sisterhood, wifehood, and motherhood, or other tasks which influence lives for good. ...

... All of you need to drink in deeply the gospel truths about the eternal nature of your individual identity and the uniqueness of your personality. You need, more and more, to feel the perfect love which our Father in Heaven has for you and to sense the value he places upon you as an individual. Ponder upon these great truths, especially in those moments when (in the stillness of such anxiety as you may experience as an individual) you might otherwise wonder and be perplexed. ...

There is no greater and more glorious set of promises given to women than those which come through the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ. Where else can you learn who you really are? Where else can you be given the necessary explanations and assurances about the nature of life? From what other source can you learn about your own uniqueness and identity? From whom else could you learn of our Father in Heaven’s glorious plan of happiness?¹⁸

Righteous women can be great contributors to the world and to the kingdom of God.

There has never been a time in the world when the role of woman has been more confused. There has never been a time in the Church when women are able to do more to show what their true role in the world can and ought to be. The impact and influence of women and mothers on our world is most important. The thought that “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world” is more viable today than ever before.¹⁹

How special it is for Latter-day Saint women to be given the lofty assignments they have been given by our Father in Heaven, especially those of you who have been privileged to be born in this part of this last dispensation. Let other women pursue heedlessly ... their selfish interests. You can be a much needed force for love and truth and righteousness on this planet. ...

... My dear sisters, may I suggest to you something that has not been said before or at least in quite this way. Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world (in whom there is often such an inner sense of spirituality) will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world. ... Thus it will be that female exemplars of the Church will be a significant force in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the Church in the last days. ...

We love you sisters. We have confidence in you. We rejoice in your devotion. We are greatly heartened by your presence ... in this portion of this dispensation wherein your talents and spiritual strength are so desperately needed.²⁰