

# KNOWING WHO YOU ARE— AND WHO YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN

By Sheri L. Dew

This series highlights the lives of devoted women and their messages, excerpted from the book *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (2017). The complete book, along with seven bonus chapters, is available in the Gospel Library app and online at [churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit](http://churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit).

Recently, my 16-year-old niece Megan and two of her friends came for a sleepover. As we talked that evening, one of them asked me what it had been like growing up on a farm in the olden days. . . . I told Megan and her friends that in the “olden days,” I had been painfully shy and had absolutely no self-confidence.

“How did you get over feeling that way?” Megan asked. A pat answer was on the tip of my tongue when I stopped, sensing that these terrific young women were receptive to more. So I told them that the reason was a spiritual one: It wasn’t until I began to understand how the Lord felt about me that my feelings about

myself and my life slowly began to change. Their questions then came in a hurry: How did I *know* how the Lord felt? And how could they find out how He felt about them?

For several hours, scriptures in hand, we talked about how to hear the voice of the Spirit, about how eager the Lord is to unveil the knowledge stored safely inside our spirits concerning who we are and what our mission is, and about the life-changing difference it makes when we know.

. . . There is nothing more vital to our success and our happiness here than learning to hear the voice of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who reveals to us our identity—which isn’t just who we



## ABOUT SISTER DEW

Sheri Linn Dew was born in Ulysses, Kansas, USA, in 1953.

She is the oldest of five children, and by the time she finished fifth grade, she was driving a tractor on the family grain farm. On Sundays her grandmother Maudie Dew would pick her up early for church, which was held in a rented hall. They would sweep up cigarette butts and beer cans to prepare the room for church. Participating in a small branch meant she did a lot of speaking and teaching. She became the branch pianist when she was a young woman and served in her branch Primary presidency when she was 16.

After earning a history degree at Brigham Young University in 1978, she took a job as an editor with Bookcraft. She joined Deseret Book in 1988, becoming an executive vice president in 2000.

She was 35 when she joined the Relief Society general board during the presidency of Barbara W. Winder. She was only 43 when she became Mary Ellen W. Smoot’s Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency in 1997.

Sister Dew exhorted women to understand their worth during her discourse at the 2001 BYU Women’s Conference, excerpted here (punctuation standardized).

are but who we have always been. And that when we know, our lives take on a sense of purpose so stunning that we can never be the same again.

. . . Our spirits long for us to remember the truth about who we are, because the way we see ourselves, our sense of identity, affects everything we do. . . . It affects the very way we live our lives. So, today, I invite you to ponder in a new way not just who you are but who you have always been.

. . . Can you imagine that God, who knew us perfectly, reserved us

to come now, when the stakes would be higher and the opposition more intense than ever? When He would need women who would help raise and lead a chosen generation in the most lethal spiritual environment? Can you imagine that He chose us because He knew we would be fearless in building Zion?

. . . Noble and great. Courageous and determined. Faithful and fearless. That is who you are, and that is who you have always been. Understanding that truth can change your life, because this knowledge carries a

confidence that cannot be duplicated any other way.

. . . When you understand that *you* were chosen and reserved for now, and when you live in harmony with that mission, you'll be happier than you have ever been before.

. . . God is our Father, and His Only Begotten Son is the Christ. May we rejoice in once again standing tall for the Savior and serving with valor and vigor in His vineyard. And may we be fearless in building up the Zion of our God—because we know who we are and who we have always been. ■

