



Faith • Family • Relief

Under the Priesthood and after the Pattern of the Priesthood

Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

My dear sisters, how blessed we are! Not only are we members of the Church, but we are also members of Relief Society—“the Lord’s organization for women.”¹ Relief Society is evidence of God’s love for His daughters.

Doesn’t your heart thrill as you recall the exciting beginnings of this society? On March 17, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the sisters “under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood.”²

To be organized “*under the priesthood*” gave sisters authority and direction. Eliza R. Snow, second Relief Society general president, taught that Relief Society “cannot exist without the Priesthood, from the fact that it derives all its authority and influence from that source.”³ Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained, “The authority to be exercised by the officers and teachers of the Relief Society . . . was the authority that would flow to them through their organizational connection with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and through their individual setting apart under the hands of the priesthood leaders by whom they were called.”⁴

To be organized “*after the pattern of the priesthood*” gave sisters sacred responsibilities. Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, explained: “We operate in the manner of the priesthood—which means that we seek, receive, and act on revelation; make decisions in councils; and concern ourselves with caring for individuals one by one. Ours is the priesthood purpose to prepare ourselves for the blessings of eternal life by making and keeping covenants. Therefore, like our brethren who hold the priesthood, ours is a work of salvation, service, and becoming a holy people.”⁵

Barbara Thompson, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency.

What Can I Do?

1. How can I help the sisters I visit enjoy the blessings of Relief Society’s sacred work?
2. What will I do this month to increase my ability to receive personal revelation?

From the Scriptures

1 Corinthians 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 25:3; 121:36–46

From Our History

During the construction of the Nauvoo Temple, a group of sisters desired to organize to support the building effort. Eliza R. Snow drafted bylaws for this new group. When she showed them to the Prophet Joseph, he responded: “Tell the sisters their offering is accepted of the Lord, and he has something better for them. . . . I will organize the women under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood.”⁶ A short time later, the Prophet told the newly organized Relief Society: “I now turn the key to you in the name of God, and this Society shall rejoice, and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time.”⁷ The sisters were expected to rise to a new level of holiness and to prepare for the priesthood ordinances soon to be administered in the temple.

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 4.
2. Joseph Smith, quoted in Sarah Granger Kimball, “Auto-biography,” *Woman’s Exponent*, Sept. 1, 1883, 51.
3. Eliza R. Snow, “Female Relief Society,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 22, 1868, 81.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Relief Society and the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 36.
5. Julie B. Beck, “Relief Society: A Sacred Work,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 111.
6. Joseph Smith, quoted in Kimball, “Auto-biography,” 51.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 451.

For more information, go to www.reliefsociety.lds.org.

