

STRIVING TO BECOME AN INTELLIGENT AND NOBLE MOTHER

By Lilian Pagaduan-Villamor

I was struggling to find purpose in motherhood. Then an old journal entry changed my perspective.

I have always wanted to be a great contributor in science. During my undergraduate studies at Brigham Young University–Hawaii, Dr. Douglas Oba, a very supportive professor, introduced me to and trained me in the world of molecular biology and biotechnology. I even had the opportunity to work at the molecular laboratory at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, USA, for a summer internship.

When I went home to the Philippines, I landed a job at the DNA Analysis Laboratory at the University of the Philippines. The highlights of my career included working on various community projects, attending trainings and conferences, and being recognized by local and international science communities for my scientific publications. I also started my graduate program. I felt fulfilled in my new career.

After two years of working, I married my childhood friend in the temple. A little while later, we had our first baby and for the first time

I found myself struggling. I didn't know how to balance caring for the baby, spending time with my husband, keeping up with classes in my graduate program, juggling projects and papers at work, and fulfilling Church callings. I talked with my husband about my struggles, and he gently suggested that I consider stepping away from my career. I saw some wisdom in his advice, but I wasn't ready to give up my professional life yet.

When I was pregnant with our second child, I had pre-term labor that required me to be on bed rest. I finally realized that I couldn't do it all at once. I knew I had to make the choice that would be best for me and my family. After much pondering and prayer, I decided to leave my scientific work and instead devote my full time to my children.

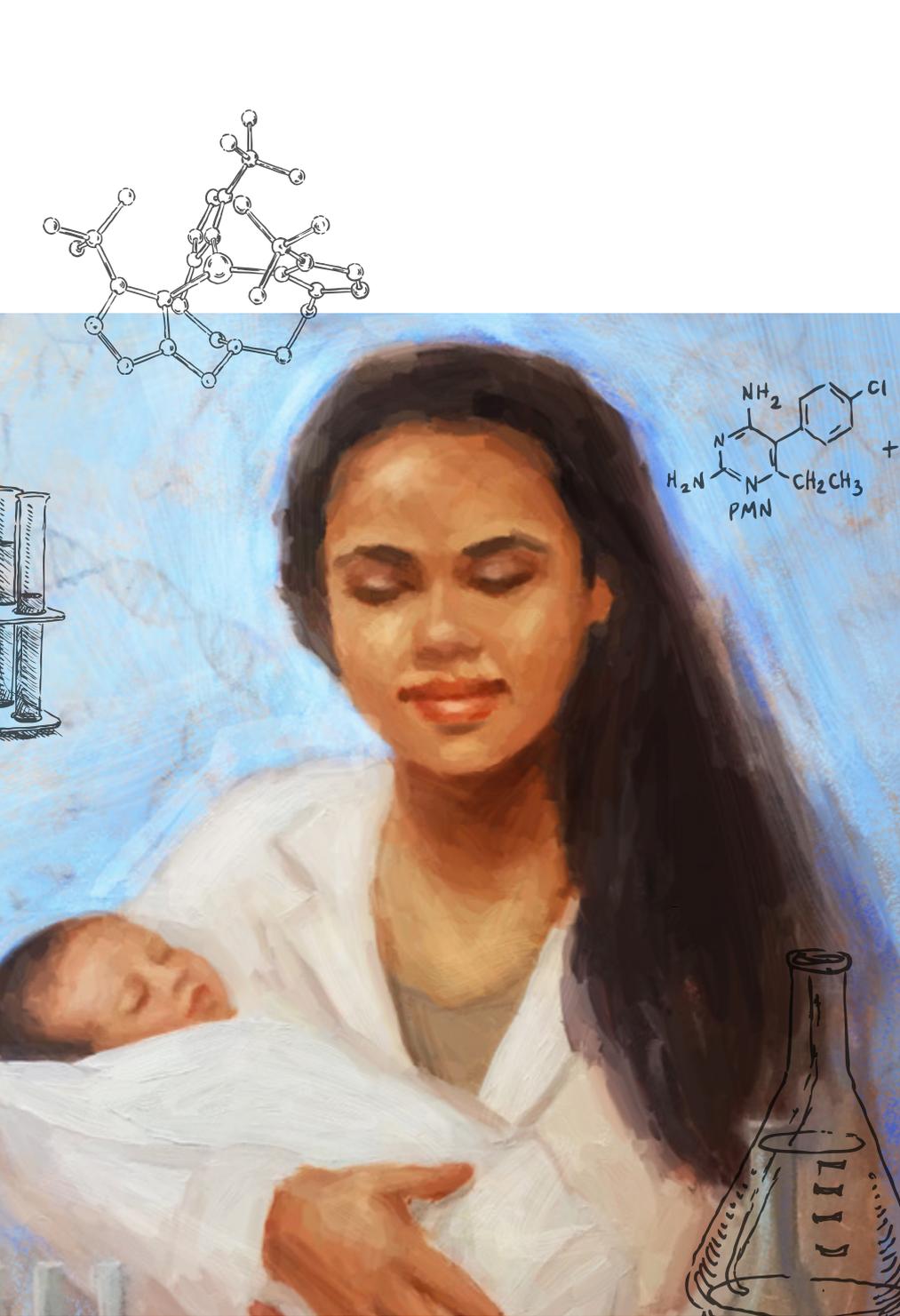
I had planned for motherhood my whole life, but I never realized how much of a sacrifice this choice would be. I tried my best to keep a positive

attitude, but I often felt sad that my career and graduate program had been cut short. I prayed to Heavenly Father for the spiritual strength to fulfill my role as a mother wholeheartedly. My husband patiently listened to my concerns. He encouraged me to write out my thoughts and feelings in my journal, which I had been unable to update for a while because of my busy schedule.

One day, while my kids were sleeping, I decided to look through my old journals. As I reviewed them, I was struck by how consistently I had written about my great desire to be a mom when I was a youth and young single adult. One statement in particular touched me: "I will strive to excel in my academic and spiritual learning so I can be an intelligent and noble mom to my kids."

That enlightenment was what I needed the most! I felt the Spirit testify to me that I had made the right choice for my family. I realized that my education and work experience were





INSPIRED CHOICES

“Once you know the Lord’s will, you can then move forward in faith to fulfill your individual purpose. One sister may be inspired to continue her education and attend medical school, allowing her to have significant impact on her patients and to advance medical research. For another sister, inspiration may lead her to forego a scholarship to a prestigious institution and instead begin a family much earlier than has become common in this generation, allowing her to make a significant and eternal impact on her children now.

“Is it possible for two similarly faithful women to receive such different responses to the same basic questions? Absolutely! What’s right for one woman may not be right for another. That’s why it is so important that we should not question each other’s choices or the inspiration behind them.”

President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Women of Dedication, Faith, Determination, and Action” (Brigham Young University Women’s Conference address, May 1, 2015), 4, womensconference.byu.edu.

not just for my benefit but for my children’s. It was a renewal of my testimony and eternal perspective of motherhood.

I was a stay-at-home mother for five years. Eventually, I completed my graduate program and went back to work when our children were a little older. I am continually learning

to balance my limited time in performing my duties at work, home, and church, but I know it all works out with the Lord’s help. I continue to gain valuable experience in the “laboratory of life” and find joy and purpose in motherhood. ■

The author lives in Metro Manila, Philippines.