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Relief Society General President

“And upon the Handmaids in Those Days Will I Pour Out My Spirit”

We know we are successful if we live so that we qualify for, receive, and know how to follow the Spirit.

In the past year I have met thousands of Latter-day Saint women in many countries. The list of challenges these sisters face is lengthy and sobering. There are family troubles, economic tests, calamities, accidents, and illnesses. There is much distraction and not enough peace and joy. Despite popular media messages to the contrary, no one is rich enough, beautiful enough, or clever enough to avoid a mortal experience.

The questions sisters ask are serious and insightful. They articulate uneasiness about the future, sorrow for unrealized expectations, some indecision, and diminished feelings of self-worth. They also reflect a deep desire to do what is right.

There has grown in me an overwhelming testimony of the value of daughters of God. So much depends on them. In my visits with the sisters, I have felt that there has never been a greater need for increased faith and personal righteousness. There has

never been a greater need for strong families and homes. There has never been more that could be done to help others who are in need. How does one increase faith, strengthen families, and provide relief?¹ How does a woman in our day find answers to her own questions and stand strong and immovable against incredible opposition and difficulty?

Personal Revelation

A good woman knows that she does not have enough time, energy, or opportunity to take care of all of the people or do all of the worthy things her heart yearns to do. Life is not calm for most women, and each day seems to require the accomplishment of a million things, most of which are important. A good woman must constantly resist alluring and deceptive messages from many sources telling her that she is entitled to more time away from her responsibilities and that she deserves a life of greater ease and



independence. But with personal revelation, she can prioritize correctly and navigate this life confidently.

The ability to qualify for, receive, and act on personal revelation is the single most important skill that can be acquired in this life. Qualifying for the Lord's Spirit begins with a desire for that Spirit and implies a certain degree of worthiness. Keeping the commandments, repenting, and renewing covenants made at baptism lead to the blessing of always having the Lord's Spirit with us.² Making and keeping temple covenants also adds spiritual strength and power to a woman's life. Many answers to difficult questions are found by reading the scriptures because the scriptures are an aid to revelation.³ Insight found in scripture accumulates over time, so it is important to spend some time in the scriptures every day. Daily prayer is also essential to having the Lord's Spirit with us.⁴ Those who earnestly seek

help through prayer and scripture study often have a paper and pencil nearby to write questions and record impressions and ideas.

Revelation can come hour by hour and moment by moment as we do the right things. When women nurture as Christ nurtured, a power and peace can descend to guide when help is needed. For instance, mothers can feel help from the Spirit even when tired, noisy children are clamoring for attention, but they can be distanced from the Spirit if they lose their temper with children. Being in the right places allows us to receive guidance. It requires a conscious effort to diminish distractions, but having the Spirit of revelation makes it possible to prevail over opposition and persist in faith through difficult days and essential routine tasks. Personal revelation gives us the understanding of what to do every day to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes,

and seek those who need our help. Because personal revelation is a constantly renewable source of strength, it is possible to feel bathed in help even during turbulent times.

We are told to put our trust in that Spirit which leads us "to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously."⁵ We are also told that this Spirit will enlighten our minds, fill our souls with joy, and help us know all things we should do.⁶ Promised personal revelation comes when we ask for it, prepare for it, and go forward in faith, trusting that it will be poured out upon us.

Relief Society—Teaching, Inspiring, and Strengthening

Additionally, the Lord in His wisdom has provided a Relief Society to help His daughters in these latter days. When Relief Society functions in an inspired way, it lifts women up and out of a troubled world and into a way of living that prepares them for the blessings of eternal life. This society has at its very core the responsibility to help sisters increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and seek out and help others who are in need. Through Relief Society, sisters can receive answers to their questions and be blessed by the combined spiritual power of all the sisters. Relief Society validates the true and eternal nature of daughters of God. It is a sacred trust, a guiding light, and a system of watchcare that teaches and inspires women to be strong and immovable. Its motto, "Charity never faileth,"⁷ is embodied in all good women.

When a girl advances into Relief Society or when a woman is baptized into the Church, she becomes part of a sisterhood that strengthens her in her preparation for eternal life. Entrance into Relief Society signifies



that a woman can be trusted and relied upon to make a significant contribution in the Church. She continues to progress as an individual without receiving much outward credit or praise.

The second general Relief Society president, Eliza R. Snow, said this to the sisters: “We want to be ladies in very deed, not according to the term of the word as the world judges, but fit companions of the Gods and Holy Ones. In an organized capacity we can assist each other in not only doing good but in refining ourselves, and whether few or many come forward and help to prosecute this great work, they will be those that will fill honorable positions in the Kingdom of God. . . . Women should be women and not babies that need petting and correction all the time. I know we like to be appreciated but if we do not get all the appreciation which we think is our due, what matters? We know the Lord has laid high responsibility upon us, and there is not a wish or desire that the Lord has implanted in our hearts in righteousness but will be realized, and the greatest good we can do to ourselves and each other is to refine and cultivate ourselves in everything

that is good and ennobling to qualify us for those responsibilities.”⁸

Measuring Success

Good women always have a desire to know if they are succeeding. In a world where the measures of success are often distorted, it is important to seek appreciation and affirmation from proper sources. To paraphrase a list found in *Preach My Gospel*, we are doing well when we develop attributes of Christ and strive to obey His gospel with exactness. We are doing well when we seek to improve ourselves and do our best. We are doing well when we increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and seek out and help others who are in need. We know we are successful if we live so that we qualify for, receive, and know how to follow the Spirit. When we have done our very best, we may still experience disappointments, but we will not be disappointed in ourselves. We can feel certain that the Lord is pleased when we feel the Spirit working through us.⁹ Peace, joy, and hope are available to those who measure success properly.

A revelation in the book of Joel states that in the last days, sons and

daughters of God will prophesy and the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon His servants and His handmaids.¹⁰ President Spencer W. Kimball echoed this prophecy when he said:

“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 spiritual growth of the Church in the last days.”¹¹

I bear my witness that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true. The Lord depends on His daughters to do their part to strengthen the homes of Zion and build His kingdom on the earth. As they seek and qualify for personal revelation, the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon His handmaids in these latter days. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Jacob 2:17; Mosiah 4:26; Doctrine and Covenants 38:35; 44:6.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
3. See 2 Nephi 32:3.
4. See 3 Nephi 19:24–33.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 11:12.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:13–14.
7. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
8. Eliza R. Snow, address to Lehi Ward Relief Society, Oct. 27, 1869, Lehi Ward, Alpine (Utah) Stake, in Relief Society, Minute Book, 1868–79, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 26–27.
9. See *Preach My Gospel* (2004), 10–11.
10. See Joel 2:28–29.
11. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 103–4.