

MEN AND WOMEN IN THE **WORK** OF THE **LORD**

In our Heavenly Father's great priesthood-endowed plan, men and women have different but equally valued roles.



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I believe there are some truths that both women and men need to understand about the essential role women have in strengthening and building up the kingdom of God on the earth. In so many ways women are the heart of the Church. So with the help of the Lord, I would like to pay tribute to the faithful women and young women of the Church. To you dear sisters, wherever you live in the world, please know of the great affection for and trust that the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles have in you.

Let me begin with a refresher course about what we are doing here on earth.

We are beloved spirit sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. We lived with Him in the premortal realms. In order to fulfill the mission of bringing “to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39), Heavenly Father created a plan designed to help His children achieve their ultimate potential. Our Father’s plan called for man to fall and to be separated from Him for a time by being born into mortality, gaining a body, and entering a period of testing and

probation. His plan provided for a Savior to redeem mankind from the Fall. The Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ provides the way through gospel ordinances and sacred covenants to return to the presence of God. Because we would live in a mortal environment filled with danger and distractions, Heavenly Father and His Son knew we would need access to power greater than our own. They knew we would need access to Their power. The gospel and doctrine of Christ give all who will accept it power to achieve eternal life and power to find joy in the journey.

There are those who question the place of women in God’s plan and in the Church. I’ve been interviewed enough by national and international media to tell you that most journalists with whom I have dealt have had preconceived notions about this topic. Through the years many have asked questions implying that women are second-class citizens in the Church. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Let me suggest five key points for you to ponder regarding this important topic.

1. God Has a Plan to Help Us Achieve Eternal Life

Our Heavenly Father created both women and men, who are His spirit daughters and sons. This means that gender is eternal. He has a plan designed to help all who choose to follow Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, achieve their destiny as heirs of eternal life.

If our eventual exaltation is Their essential goal and purpose and if They are omniscient and perfect, as we know They are, then They understand best how to prepare, teach, and lead us so that we have the greatest chance to qualify for exaltation.

Most everyone has family or friends who have been caught up in various troubling social issues. Arguing about the issues generally does not bring any resolution and, in fact, can create contention. There are some questions about the Church's position on sensitive issues that are hard to answer to anyone's satisfaction. However,

when we seek the Lord in prayer about how to feel and what to do in these situations, the impression comes: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ and do you follow Him and the Father?" I believe most everyone in the Church at one time or another will wonder if they can do all they are asked to do. But if we really believe in the Lord, the reassurance comes: "I believe Jesus Christ, and I'm willing to do whatever He needs me to do." So we move forward. How powerful are the words "I believe Jesus Christ"!

Our testimonies and our peace of mind and our well-being begin with the willingness to believe that our Father in Heaven does indeed know best.

2. The Church Is Governed through Priesthood Keys

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's Church, and His Church is governed by



and through priesthood authority and priesthood keys. “Priesthood keys are the authority God has given to priesthood leaders to direct, control, and govern the use of His priesthood on earth.”¹

Those who have priesthood keys—whether that be a deacon who has keys for his quorum or a bishop who has keys for his ward or the President of the Church, who holds all priesthood keys—literally make it possible for all who serve faithfully under their direction to exercise priesthood authority and have access to priesthood power.

All men and all women serve under the direction of those who have keys. This is how the Lord governs His Church.

Let me repeat something I stated in the April 2013 general conference: “In our Heavenly Father’s great priesthood-endowed plan, men have the unique responsibility to administer the priesthood, but they are not the priesthood. Men and women have different but equally valued roles. Just as a woman cannot conceive a child without a man, so a man cannot fully exercise the power of the priesthood to establish an eternal family without a woman. . . . In the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife.”²

Why are men ordained to priesthood offices and not women? President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) explained that it was the Lord, not man, “who designated that men in His Church should hold the priesthood” and that it was also the Lord who endowed women with “capabilities to round out this great and marvelous organization, which is the Church and kingdom of God.”³ When all is said and done, the Lord has not revealed why He has organized His Church as He has.

Let us not forget that approximately one-half of all the teaching that takes place in the Church is done by sisters. Much of the leadership provided is from our sisters. Many service opportunities and activities are planned and directed by women. The counsel and other participation of women in ward and stake councils and in general councils

at Church headquarters provide needed insight, wisdom, and balance.

It takes both men who respect women and their distinctive spiritual gifts and women who respect the priesthood keys held by men to invite the full blessings of heaven in any endeavor in the Church.

3. Men and Women Are Equally Important

Men and women are equal in God’s eyes and in the eyes of the Church, but equal does not mean they are the same. The responsibilities and divine gifts of men and women differ in their nature but not in their importance or influence. Our Church doctrine places women equal to and yet different from men. God does not regard either gender as better or more important than the other. President Hinckley declared to women that “our Eternal Father . . . never intended that you should be less than the crowning glory of His creations.”⁴

Men and women have different gifts, different strengths, and different points of view and inclinations. That is one of the fundamental reasons why we need each other. It takes a man and a woman to create a family, and it takes men and women to carry out the work of the Lord. A husband and wife righteously working together complete each other. Let us be careful that we do not attempt to tamper with our Heavenly Father’s plan and purposes in our lives.

4. All Are Blessed by Priesthood Power

When men and women go to the temple, they are both endowed with the same power, which is priesthood power. While the authority of the priesthood is directed through priesthood keys, and priesthood keys are held only by worthy men, access to the power and the blessings of the priesthood is available to all of God’s children.

Our Father in Heaven is generous with His power. All men and all women have access to this power for help in their lives. All who have made sacred covenants with the Lord and who honor those covenants are eligible to receive



personal revelation, to be blessed by the ministering of angels, to commune with God, to receive the fulness of the gospel, and, ultimately, to become heirs alongside Jesus Christ of all our Father has.

5. We Need to Know and Bear Testimony of the Doctrine

We need the women of the Church to know the doctrine of Christ and to bear testimony of the Restoration in every way you can. Never has there been a more complex time in the history of the earth. Satan and his minions have been perfecting the weapons in their arsenal for millennia, and they are experienced at destroying faith and trust in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ among the human family.

All of us—men, women, young adults, youth, and boys and girls—have the Lord and His Church to defend, to protect, and to spread throughout the earth. We need more of the distinctive, influential voices and faith of women. We need you to learn the doctrine and to understand what we believe so that you can bear your testimonies about the truth of all things—whether those testimonies be given around a campfire at Young Women camp, in a testimony meeting, in a blog, or on Facebook. Only you can show the world what women of God who have made covenants look like and believe.

Sisters, your sphere of influence is a unique sphere—one that cannot be duplicated by men. No one can defend our Savior with any more persuasion or power than you, the daughters of God, can—you who have such inner strength and conviction. The power of a converted woman's voice is immeasurable, and the Church needs your voices now more than ever.

I leave you my witness and my testimony that we are in a time when we must stand in unity. We must stand together—men and women, young men and young women, boys and girls. We must stand for the plan of our Heavenly Father. We must defend Him. He is being pushed aside. We cannot stand idly by as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and allow that to continue to happen without being courageous enough to let our voices be heard.

May God bless you to have the courage to study and to know the simple truths of the gospel and then to share them every chance you get. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on August 20, 2013. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.1.1.
2. M. Russell Ballard, "This Is My Work and Glory," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 19.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 70.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Strong Against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 98.