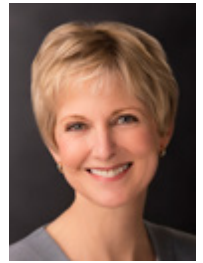




These paintings by female Latter-day Saint artists depict the influence and many roles of women.





By Jean B. Bingham
Relief Society
General President

Extraordinary Daughters of God

Reaching out in small and simple ways can bless our families and others in extraordinary ways.

Editors' note: As we look at why we need the Church, Sister Bingham explains how belonging to an organization like the Relief Society helps us fulfill our divine potential through opportunities to participate together in the Lord's work of salvation.

My story is quite ordinary. Growing up, I loved learning, but I was never the top student in any class. I cannot boast of any expert skills. I play the piano but only enough to stumble through a hymn. I love to visit art museums, but my artistic talents are limited to doodling designs in my notebooks. I can sew a wearable skirt, but tailoring a suit is definitely beyond my ability.

Although I was blessed with good health and loved to run through the park or swim in the lake, I didn't participate in school sports at any level. I was never asked to the prom, and I wasn't the president of anything. I was never one of the popular group, and one strikingly attractive friend once scrutinized my features and said, "Well, you'll never be beautiful, but you could be cute." In other words, I was just average.

Some of you may relate to these kinds of experiences, feeling that you are also just average—maybe even less than average. If you're human—and particularly, female—you have probably experienced those times of self-doubt and discouragement that you are not all that you want to be.

And yet, even in my ordinariness, Heavenly Father saw value and has helped me begin to develop the gifts and graces He knows will help me become all that He has designed me to be. Know that your Heavenly Father will provide all that *you* need to



become extraordinary as a daughter of God. Every one of us can be spectacular because of our unique bundle of talents and abilities.

Unlike in the world, in His kingdom there is no winner's platform that has room only for one or two. *Each* of His daughters has been taught and prepared and gifted premortally with marvelous potential to become a queen in the celestial kingdom.

Your Potential for Greatness

What do you want to accomplish in your life? What are your goals and aspirations? If your long-term goal is to enter the celestial kingdom to live forever with our Heavenly Parents and with loved family members, that singular focus will take you farther than you now think is possible (see 1 Corinthians 2:9).

You have incredible potential for good because you are a covenant daughter of Heavenly Parents. The evidence of your inherent potential for greatness is the simple fact that you were born on the earth because you made the choice in the premortal world to accept Heavenly Father's plan of salvation and to follow the example of His Son, Jesus Christ. And because Jesus Christ was willing to take upon Himself the sins and infirmities—or inadequacies—of each of us (see Alma 7:11–13) and fulfilled that sacred trust through His infinite Atonement, we can have every confidence that we can become all we were divinely designed to be. As we make and keep sacred covenants, we demonstrate our desire to fulfill that divine potential. We know we cannot do this on our own, but through Heavenly Father's love and the Savior's grace, we can accomplish all that is required for exaltation.

That thought sustained me when I was called to be Relief Society General President. Knowing that I do not have all the wisdom and ability to fulfill what is required, I nevertheless take comfort and strength from the knowledge that God “has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth” (Mosiah 4:9) and that if we just try, just do our best, imperfect as that will be, the Lord “will be on [our] right hand and on [our] left, . . . and [His] angels round about [us], to bear [us] up” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:88). All He requires is “the heart and a willing mind” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:34). As we are obedient to His commandments, we will be strengthened to accomplish all that is required in this life as well as for entrance into His kingdom in the life hereafter. The choice to become a disciple of Jesus Christ gives us the opportunity to wield a more-than-might-be-expected influence on those around us.

No matter where we live, the makeup of our family, the size of our bank account, or how long we have been a member of the Church, we can each be a powerful influence for good. Living with integrity at home and in the community, using a gentle voice and kind words with a challenging child or difficult co-worker, demonstrating your standards by your modest way of dressing, and reaching out of your comfort zone to become acquainted with those who live around you are just some of the many simple actions we can take that will influence others to also rise to a higher plane.

Those who are familiar with the history of the settlement of frontier areas around the world know that many towns began as haphazard gatherings of rough men who came to do business and find their fortunes. It wasn't until women arrived in increasing numbers and insisted on establishing churches and schools and an orderly environment that real progress was made on what could be called civilized living.

"From age immemorial, societies have relied on the moral force of women," said Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "While certainly not the only positive influence at work in society, the moral foundation provided by women has proved uniquely beneficial to the common good. Perhaps, because it is pervasive, this contribution of women is often underappreciated. . . . Women bring with them into the world a certain virtue, a divine gift that makes them adept at instilling such qualities as faith, courage, empathy, and refinement in relationships and in cultures."¹

Women are given gifts that allow them to see the details as well as the big picture, often at the same time. Discover those gifts and use them, dear sisters!



I remember President James E. Faust (1920–2007) telling us in his rich yet humble voice: “You sisters do not know the full extent of your influence. You sisters enrich all of humanity. . . . Each woman brings her own separate, unique strengths to the family and the Church.”²

What Does Relief Society Mean to You?

As adult female members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you and I belong to one of the oldest and largest women’s organizations in the world. With more than 7.1 million sisters around the globe, we have a bond that can be eternal.

Relief Society is more than a class on Sunday. As President Faust taught, it is a divinely established sisterhood. It is a place of learning. It is an organization whose basic charter is caring for others as expressed in our motto, “Charity Never Faileth.”

“Membership in Relief Society . . . provides a home away from [our] heavenly home, where [we] can fellowship with others who share [our] beliefs and values.”³

There have been bumps and challenges along the way. If you have had

a less-than-comfortable experience at Relief Society, remember that we are all learning. It is a safe place for sisters to bring their questions and for those who are searching for identity and purpose. It is a place that will help us blossom individually and improve collectively.

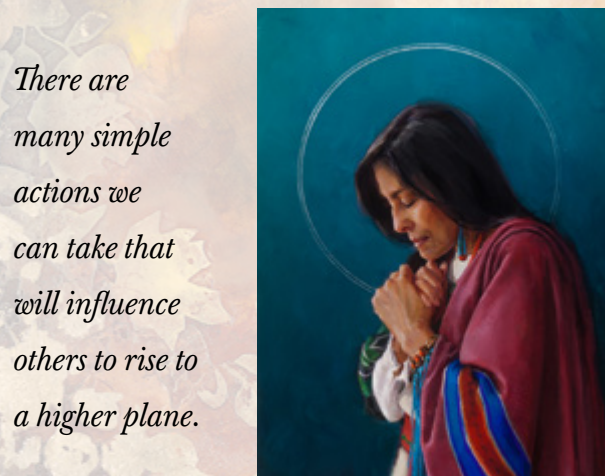
If you are familiar with the updated Relief Society purpose statement, you know that “Relief Society helps prepare women for the blessings of eternal life as they increase faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement; [as they] strengthen individuals, families, and homes through ordinances and covenants; and [as they] work in unity to help those in need.”⁴

So, number one, we work to fulfill our divine potential. To do that, we “all work together” to love, “to cheer and to bless in [the Savior’s] name.”⁵ We participate in the work of salvation, which includes member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel⁶—all things which you are already doing.

Where Do We Start?

Where and how do we do this work? As we put our arm around a shy sister at church, as we reach out to a young woman who is struggling, as we work to feed and clothe and teach a child on a daily basis, as we share what makes us happy about the restored gospel with our neighbor, as we attend the temple at an inconvenient time, as we work to develop our talents with the goal of being an instrument for the Lord—all of these actions and many more acts of simple but meaningful service are part of the work of salvation. *That* is our mission, and it truly is vast,⁷ but it *is doable* when we each do something—and keep at it!





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As Emma Smith, the first Relief Society General President, said in 1842, “We are going to do something extraordinary.”⁸

For instance, a busy young mother in Arizona, USA, wondered what she could do to help a newly arrived refugee family in her community. She soon learned that she could give them a few things for their empty apartment. When she and her children visited the family to bring the items, she realized that the mother had no purse to carry her personal belongings. She knew that she and many of her friends had extra purses, so she posted a request on social media. That simple beginning has blossomed into a warehouse full of items needed by just-arriving families and helped create a sweet bond between these women of different faiths.

Sister Eliza R. Snow, the second Relief Society General President, testified regarding the blessings of Relief Society: “If any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are feeling in the least [limited] in their present spheres, they will now find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed.”⁹

So, what extraordinary thing will you choose to do? Choose something according to your available time and resources. “Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means . . . ; but be diligent” (Doctrine and Covenants 10:4). Whether your work of salvation is largely in the home at this time in life or your influence extends to a global scale, or somewhere in between, the Lord is pleased with your efforts when you are focused on serving God’s children and the eternal goal of returning to Him as a new and improved version of your spiritual self. As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles phrased it so succinctly, “Exaltation is our goal; discipleship is our journey.”¹⁰

As we go forward in this journey of discipleship, may we each determine to reach out in small and simple ways that bless our families and others in extraordinary ways. May we treasure our relationships in this divinely designed organization and come to know and follow Jesus Christ, whose teachings and perfect example will lead us back to our Heavenly Father. ■

From an address given at BYU Women’s Conference on May 5, 2017.

NOTES

1. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Moral Force of Women,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 29.
2. James E. Faust, “What It Means to Be a Daughter of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 102.
3. See James E. Faust, “What It Means to Be a Daughter of God,” 100.
4. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.1.1.
5. “As Sisters in Zion,” *Hymns*, no. 309.
6. See *Handbook 2*, 5.1.
7. See “As Sisters in Zion,” *Hymns*, no. 309.
8. Emma Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 14.
9. Eliza R. Snow, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 44.
10. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “It Works Wonderfully!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 23.