





**By President
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The Essential Role of Women

The work of the kingdom of God cannot fulfill its true destiny without rolling forward hand in hand with the faithful, wonderful sisters of the Church.

Women have remarkable influence. No one else can help move the gospel kingdom forward and make the world a better place quite like they can.

When you sisters join with other covenant women in unity and harmony, there is no limit to your influence for good. I have witnessed your significant and eternal influence in individual lives as well as in families, and I have seen it in countless cultures and countries around the globe.

I have seen what you can accomplish in branches, wards, stakes, missions, temples, and general Church assignments. Your contributions—in small and large businesses and charities, as well as in civic, educational, health, and sports organizations—are immeasurable.

Women in Councils

For years I have spoken about the power of councils with faithful women participating. Your insight and counsel are absolutely essential. Today the Lord has richly blessed the Church and the world because more sister missionaries are serving faithfully in mission leadership positions and participating in mission leadership councils. More are receiving their endowments earlier, thereby enlarging the number of temple covenant women serving

in the Church. The sister leaders in General Presidencies pray and speak in general conference.

Women in the Scriptures

Some women wish they could find more stories of women in the scriptures and in Church history. We need to develop the skill to find their influence, as did one young sister. She said, “Mormon must have had an amazing wife to have raised a remarkable son like Moroni!”

If you look carefully and with the right spirit, you can find similar manifestations of effective nurturing throughout the scriptures.

For a number of years now, the Church has focused attention on the faithful sisters in the Church and their contributions. For example, I invite you to examine the topic “Women of Conviction” found at history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

The role of the pioneer sisters was remarkable. When writing about the pioneers, one author, who was not a Latter-day Saint, stated, “Their women were incredible.”¹

As we look for and find women in our scriptures and in our history, we will see better the power and influence women have in our family, community, the Church, and the world.



We are seeing the fulfillment of Joseph Smith's prophetic vision as new opportunities and advancements for women unfold in unprecedented ways.

Balancing Options

In my lifetime we have seen numerous women appointed and elected to public offices, fill positions as CEOs of major corporations and organizations, and admitted in increasing numbers to prestigious business, law, and medical schools.

Joseph Smith told the Relief Society in 1842, "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—this is the beginning of better days [for women]."²

We are seeing the fulfillment of this prophetic vision as new opportunities and advancements for women unfold in unprecedented ways. Balancing everything among all of the available options can be a challenge. In the end, most of us have to choose among competing options.

Of course, we have a divine pattern to follow as outlined in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," but we know that mortality can be complicated. Many women are single for long periods of time. Some women are married. Others become single when a spouse dies or when they divorce. And some women may never marry.

Nevertheless, if we are faithful and endure to the end, no righteous desire will be denied, and *all blessings* ultimately will be received. Each of you must come to know what the Lord wants for you, given the choices before you.

Once you know the Lord's will, you can move forward in faith to fulfill your individual purpose.

Blessings in Store

If members of the Church who worship in the temple are attuned, they will come to realize that the Lord has marvelous blessings in store for His faithful daughters and sons throughout eternity.

And what are those blessings? This contextual insight from President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, explains them: "The purpose of mortal life and the mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to prepare the sons and daughters of God for their destiny—to become like our heavenly parents."³

The gospel story is a family story—nothing more, nothing less. It begins with heavenly parents, and it ends with children making their way through the sometimes exhilarating, sometimes overwhelming challenges of mortality and back to their heavenly home, having received all of the essential ordinances of eternal exaltation.

That's the story of our lives. God has given us the outline, but He leaves it up to us to flesh out the details through our choices and faithfulness. There is an extraordinarily happy ending in store for all who desire it. But before we can claim it, we have to become more than just His children—we have to become His disciples.

Women as Disciples of Christ

Life is filled with distractions that have the potential to lead us away from the core teachings of the Church—especially the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it."⁴

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is at the heart of our message! It is our core value. It is our doctrinal center. It is the heart and soul of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

If you have not yet felt the truth and power of the Savior's Atonement in your life, I invite you to refocus on the central message of the Restoration—a message declaring that we can be “made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:69).

Sisters, please do whatever is necessary to stay focused on the simple and central message of the Restoration. Accept it. Understand it. Embrace it. Love it. Share it. Defend it.

Women of Covenant Power

Now, I would ask you to do the same thing the Prophet Joseph Smith asked the Relief Society sisters to do. “The . . . Relief Society is not only to relieve the poor, but to save souls,” he said.⁵

“Every sister in this Church who has made covenants with the Lord has a divine mandate to help save souls, to lead the women of the world, to strengthen the homes of Zion, and to build the kingdom of God.”⁶ Please help us to keep the Church moving forward by helping to generate increased faith in the lives of our individual members.

Righteous and faithful women have always played an essential role in saving souls and defending the kingdom of God. However, you women of this last dispensation have especially important roles and responsibilities to fulfill. You are women of determination, faith, dedication, and action.

Like faithful sisters in the past, you need to learn how to use the priesthood authority with which you have been endowed to obtain every eternal blessing that will be yours.

Women of this last dispensation have especially important roles and responsibilities to fulfill.



President M. Russell Ballard's daughters.

I ask our Heavenly Father to bless you that you may have the peace and calm assurance that what you do within the Church is essential to the growth and preparation of this world for that day when the Lord and Savior will say, “It is enough,” and will come to rule and reign.

The work of the kingdom of God will roll forward, but it cannot fulfill its true destiny without rolling forward hand in hand with you faithful, wonderful sisters of the Church. ■

From a Brigham Young University Women's Conference address, “Women of Dedication, Faith, Determination, and Action,” delivered on May 1, 2015.

NOTES

1. Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (1964), 13.
2. Joseph Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2017), 14–15.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Same-Gender Attraction,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1995, 7.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49.
5. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 453.
6. M. Russell Ballard, “Women of Righteousness,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 70; *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 39.

