



Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting

The Priesthood and the Auxiliaries
of the Relief Society, Young Women,
and Primary

JANUARY 10, 2004

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Challenges Facing the Family



The Disintegration of Families

I should like to speak today on challenges facing the family. In recent times, society has been plagued with a cancer. I speak of the disintegration of many of our homes and families. Confusion and disorder are all too common in society, but we must not permit them to destroy our families. In every country there is a general breakdown of the moral fabric of society that confronts the sacred family institutions with new challenges. You are all aware of this because it engulfs us. Governments exercise less and less moral authority. So the principal institutions which foster

righteous living are the church and the family.

The family relationship of father, mother, and children is the oldest and most enduring institution in the world. It has survived all differences of time, geography, and culture. Because marriage between a man and a woman is a natural state that is ordained of God, the Prophet Joseph taught that “marriage was an institution of heaven, instituted in the Garden of Eden; [and] that it was necessary [that] it should be solemnized by the authority of the everlasting Priesthood.”¹ It is a moral imperative.

By all odds, marriage is the most important decision of mortal life. One should not get married just to get married. Mature preparation is required to take on the important responsibilities inherent in this sacred relationship. Marriage also requires faith—faith in oneself, faith in one’s marriage partner, and faith in the Lord. It also requires total commitment by both parties.

The first event in establishing a family is to get married! The reluctance for some to marry seems to be increasing worldwide. Between 1970 and 2001, the marriage rate in the United States declined from 76.5 to 45.6.² The major factors contributing

to this decline are young people delaying marriage, increases in the proportion of adult population who have never married, and an increase in cohabitation.³ The marriage rates in four reported South American countries have dramatically declined in the past decade, and in most European countries they have also dramatically decreased for several decades.⁴ Studies, however, show that Latter-day Saints are more likely to marry than people in the general population and also that men who marry generally live longer and are more healthy and happy than those who do not.⁵

At the heart of a happy family is complete devotion of both parents to each other. In terms of sexual intimacy, the Lord’s law is abstinence before marriage and fidelity afterward. As stated in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” “The sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”⁶

Unfortunately, marriage is becoming less valued. Cohabitation is now widely accepted in many places as an alternative to marriage. Cohabitation is often seen as a trial marriage, with little commitment.

Since 1960, in the United States there has been a 760 percent increase in unmarried couples living together, amounting to 3.8 million couples in the year 2000.⁷ Most cohabitations end without marriage and are relatively short. Statistics show that cohabiting couples are much more likely to break up than are married couples.⁸

The statistics of some representative countries indicate that the percentage of divorce is also increasing. Experts project that about half of the women in the United States will have a marriage dissolve some time in their life.⁹ Another alarming statistic

is that out-of-wedlock births have increased by 158 percent.¹⁰

Also disturbing is the shift in attitude about the purpose of marriage. More and more young people view marriage “as a couples relationship, designed to fulfill the emotional needs of adults, rather than an institution for bringing up children.” The pursuit of such “soul-mate relationship[s] may [well] weaken marriage as an institution for rearing children.”¹¹

Another disturbing challenge to the family is that children are becoming less valued. In many parts of the world, people are having fewer children. Abortion is probably the clearest sign that couples do not want children. An estimated one-quarter of all pregnancies worldwide end by induced abortion. The rates range from a high of almost 50 percent in Europe to about 15 percent in Africa.¹²

Complete trust in each other greatly enriches a marriage. Nothing devastates that core of mutual trust like infidelity. Adultery is never justified. Occasionally marriages survive this destructive experience and families are preserved, but to do so requires the aggrieved partner to give unreserved love great enough to forgive and forget. It requires the errant partner to want desperately to repent, humbly seek forgiveness, and actually forsake evil.

Safeguarding Our Families

Loyalty to our companion should not be merely physical but mental and spiritual as well. Flirtations are never harmless, and jealousy has no place in a marriage. Marriage partners must avoid the very appearance of evil by shunning any questionable contact with any person to whom they are not married. Virtue is the strong glue that holds marriage together. Said the Lord, “Thou shalt

love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22).

Any promise made by a man and a woman in a marriage ceremony—especially a temple sealing—has the dignity of one of the most important covenants we can make. Sacred covenants must always be honored. The challenges facing families today are many and great. Our family relationships need every protection that can be instituted, and keeping sacred covenants is a powerful defense.

Nehemiah of the Old Testament was building a wall with “no breach left therein” to protect Jerusalem (Nehemiah 6:1). His enemies entreated him to come down from the wall because they wanted to do him mischief. Nehemiah stayed on the wall and said, “I cannot come down [from the wall]: why should the work cease?” (v. 3).

We cannot build walls of brick and stone around our families, but we must constantly put safeguards around them to protect them. These safeguards will be a protection. May I mention three ways to protect and strengthen our families.



Family Prayer

One of these is family prayer. The Spirit of the Lord is invited into the home through prayer and harmony in the home. Parents need to teach their children that they are children of God and that they should pray to Him daily. Praying together as a family is a bonding experience. Younger children can learn how to pray as

they hear the prayers of their parents and older siblings.

My own heart and mind were captured as a young boy by my grandfather’s prayers. His large family knelt morning and night before meals. At the time, I thought his prayers were far too long! He had much to pray about. He was a farmer and rancher. It was during the Great Depression, and there was a terrible drought in the land. His animals were starving. He had many mouths to feed. But his prayers were so fervent and his faith so great, I was convinced that the Lord would provide and that all would be well. It ultimately proved to be so. Individual prayer and family prayer are indispensable to personal and family happiness.



Family Home Evening

The second safeguard is weekly family home evening. Family home evening is for all of us no matter what stage of life we are in. Sister Faust and I find that family home evening is different for us than it used to be with our children and grandchildren around us. Most of the time now we study the scriptures together. A few weeks ago in our family home evening, we read our patriarchal blessings, trying to understand what work we might yet have to accomplish. We found we still have additional work to do.

Some families have moved away from this important meeting. We should do all we can to free up Monday evenings from any other competing activities. Like glue, family

home evening bonds us together as families. Lessons should be instructive and involve family members in a relaxed atmosphere which includes an expression of love.

In our family home evenings we should try to involve everyone, except infants, in some way. Small children can participate by singing songs. Older children can be assigned to prepare and teach all or part of the lesson. Other family members can help the younger children prepare. All should be invited to ask questions arising from their own gospel study or from the lesson.

Family home evening is also a time for calendaring family activities so that everyone knows what is expected of them. It is a time when misunderstandings can be ironed out. It is also a time to encourage family members to enhance their talents and seek new skills.



Family and Personal Scripture Study

The third basic is family and personal scripture study. This requires some planning and discipline on the part of the parents and all of the children. We must help our children by strengthening their faith and understanding.

One young lady, recently married in the temple, spoke of the value of scripture study in her family when she was growing up. Her mother used to ring a large cowbell at 5:00 a.m. daily to awaken the family for scripture study. She felt grumpy and thought that this daily exercise was a waste of time, but, nonetheless, the

routine continued from her childhood into adult life.

As she looks back, this young woman now realizes that this time of family scripture study formed an important pattern which she and her brothers and sisters continue to follow in their own families. During these study times, she slowly but surely gained a testimony of the gospel. During these formative years, she also formed a special eternal bond with her parents and with each of her brothers and sisters.

Personal and family scripture study is a lifetime process. Children may struggle a little with some of the language of the scriptures, and so parents and older siblings should take time to discuss and explain some of the more difficult passages. They should explain their relevance to some of their current circumstances. Gospel study habits may take years to establish firmly in families—they do not just happen. Study habits help form a protective wall for families to rely on and help them bond together.

The Responsibilities of Parents

Recently Sister Faust and I met our newest great-grandchild. I held her in my arms for the first time. I realized that this dear little girl has so many things that she must learn to cope with so that she can be happy in life. The best place for children to learn that which is most important is in the home because home is where the most love is found. By commandment, parents are to teach their children “the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of . . . the gift of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 68:25).

To meet the challenges of life, our children must have testimonies of the Savior as the Redeemer of the world. They need to be taught that one day they will be accountable to the Lord for their actions in this life. They also

must be taught the Lord’s plan of happiness for His children. This means that they need to have a knowledge that God loves them, that we lived with Him before the world was, and that each of us can return to Him through the mission of His Son, Jesus Christ. Also, to meet the challenges of life, our children need to have an education.

Parents should administer discipline through love and righteousness. Children cannot be forced into obedience. As President Hinckley has said, “There is need for discipline with families. But discipline with severity, discipline with cruelty, inevitably leads not to correction, but rather to resentment and bitterness. It cures nothing and only aggravates the problem. It is self-defeating.”¹³ Our best method for correcting children when they have done wrong is by firmness, love, patience, kindness, persuasion, and reason.

In my opinion, members of the Church have the most effective cure for society’s decaying family life. It is for men, women, and children to honor and respect the divine roles of both fathers and mothers in the home. In doing so, mutual respect and appreciation among the members of the Church will be fostered by the righteousness found there. I recognize that there are some single parents raising children, so I would repeat the wise counsel offered by Elder John B. Dickson. He wrote, “When the ideal home situation with father and mother is not in place, then we must do the best we can to offer priesthood and organization support; but we must not displace parents in their preeminent role.”¹⁴

I also recognize that sometimes it is necessary for women to work away from the home in order to provide for the family. At the press conference on March 13, 1995, when the new First Presidency was announced, reporters

asked about working mothers. President Hinckley responded:

“Do the best you can, and remember that the greatest assets you have in this world are those children whom you have brought into the world and for whose nurture and care you are responsible.”

While there are many fathers who are closely involved in the rearing of their children, a growing number of men are “disengaged or entirely absent” in their children’s lives. Men who father children out of wedlock or cohabit rather than marrying are much less likely than married men to provide the ongoing and constant nurture and support that children require.¹⁵

The Power of the Priesthood

God has wisely established a guiding authority for the most important institutions in the world. This guiding authority is the priesthood. The priesthood provides blessings from God for all members at the hands of the servants He has designated. This authority of the priesthood can bless all members through the ministrations of home teachers, quorum presidents, bishops, fathers, and all other righteous brethren who are charged with the administration of the affairs of the kingdom of God.

Priesthood is the righteous power and influence by which boys are taught in their youth and throughout their lives to honor chastity, to be honest and industrious, and to develop respect for and stand in defense of womanhood. Priesthood is a restraining influence. Girls are taught that they can fulfill many of their desires through its influence and the power to bless.

The great sealing keys restored by Elijah, spoken of by Malachi, are invoked through the priesthood. In righteous families they operate “to turn the hearts of the fathers to

the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse” (D&C 110:15; see also Malachi 4:6). This sealing power bestowed by Elijah reveals itself in family relationships, in attributes and virtues developed in a nurturing environment, and in loving service.

We must strengthen Elijah’s mission of turning the hearts of the fathers and the children to each other. The ordinances of the temple become dynamic and productive of good only as they reveal themselves in our daily lives. These are the cords that bind families together, and the priesthood advances their development.

I strongly urge fathers, husbands, wives, and children to honor and revere the blessings of the priesthood. By so doing they can help cure some of the cancer that plagues our society and seeps into our families. I hope and pray that fathers can be taught to magnify their priesthood callings as family patriarchs and that the sisters will be blessed in their most important role—motherhood—and that together they will experience the rewards promised by our Heavenly Father, and this I say in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. *History of the Church*, 2:320.
2. Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau (number of marriages per 1,000 unmarried women age 15 and older), figure 1 in the National Marriage Project, “Social Indicators of Marital Health and Wellbeing: Trends of the Past Four Decades,” *The State of Our Unions, 2003: The Social Health of Marriage in America* (annual report, 2003), 21.
3. National Marriage Project, “Social Indicators,” 20–21.
4. United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook 2000* (2002), table 23. See also previous years.
5. See Tim B. Heaton and Kristen L. Goodman, “Religion and Family Formation,” *Review of Religious Research*, June 1985, 343–59; Elizabeth VanDenBerghe, “Religion and the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 32–45; Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage* (2000).
6. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. Arlene F. Saluter, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 450, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1990* (1991), table N (439,000 unmarried couple households in 1960); Jason Fields, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 537, *America’s Families and Living Arrangements: March 2000* (2001), 12 (3.8 million unmarried couple households in 2000; actual number of unmarried couples may be much higher).
8. National Marriage Project, “Social Indicators,” 25.
9. Rose M. Kreider and Jason Fields, Current Population Reports, Series P-70, No. 80, *Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 1996* (2001), 17–18; see also National Marriage Project, “Social Indicators,” 23–24, 25.
10. National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports, Births: Final Data for 2002*, Dec. 17, 2002, table C; National Center for Health Statistics, *Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States, 1940–99*, Oct. 18, 2000, table 1. (Data from 1973–2001.)
11. David Popenoe and Barbara Dafeo Whitehead, “Marriage and Children: Coming Together Again?” in *The State of Our Unions 2003: The Social Health of Marriage in America*, National Marriage Project (annual report, 2003), 10–11.
12. Stanley K. Henshaw and others, “The Incidence of Abortion Worldwide,” *International Family Planning Perspectives*, Supplement, Jan. 1999, table 1.
13. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 418.
14. “Lead Me, Guide Me,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2003, 17.
15. Popenoe and Whitehead, “Marriage and Children,” 9.

ELDER RICHARD G. SCOTT

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Doctrinal Foundation of the Auxiliaries



The Role of the Auxiliaries

My message is based on this marvelous message about marriage, family, and the home that President Faust has given us so clearly.

I have been assigned the privilege of discussing with you the doctrine and principles by which auxiliary organizations of the Church function and how they relate to the priesthood line. To provide a solid foundation, this message is based upon statements of several Presidents of the Church, many of which are quoted directly. This counsel is given to help you serve effectively under the guidance of your priesthood

leaders in the auxiliary organization where you live. Where needed, they will help you adjust your activities to be consistent with your local conditions and resources.

There are five Church auxiliary organizations: Young Men, Sunday School, Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary. This message is directed to you of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary. The other two will be emphasized in future broadcasts.

What is the role of an auxiliary organization? In answering that question, it is essential to remember that “the family is ordained of God” and is “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”¹ The fundamental role and purpose of the auxiliary organizations of the Church is to help “plant and make grow . . . a testimony of [Jesus] Christ and of the Gospel.” Auxiliaries can also teach of the divine mission of Joseph Smith and of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. This effort will aid families and individuals “to order their lives in accordance with the laws and principles of the restored Gospel” under the direction of the holy priesthood.²

The family and the home are the foundation of the righteous life. The priesthood is the power and the

priesthood line is the means provided by the Lord to support the family. The scriptures and approved materials are provided to instruct individuals and families in the ways of God. One example of such materials is the new study guide for the Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society for this year on the teachings of President Heber J. Grant.



The Church auxiliaries are organized to assist the individual, the family, and the priesthood in realizing divine expectations. However, the activity of each must be correlated carefully with the other auxiliaries so that order may be maintained and revealed doctrine kept pure.³ This coordination is best accomplished under priesthood leadership in stake and ward councils.

In Support of Home and Family

President Kimball taught:

“The mission of the Church to its members is to make available the principles, programs, and priesthood by which they can prepare themselves for exaltation. Our success, individually and as a Church, will largely be determined by how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the home. Only as we see clearly the responsibilities of each individual and the role of families and homes can we properly understand that priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations, even wards and stakes, exist primarily to help members live the gospel in the home. Then we can understand that people are more important than programs, and that Church programs

should always support and never detract from gospel-centered family activities. . . .

“Our commitment to home-centered gospel living should become the clear message of every priesthood and auxiliary program, reducing, where necessary, some of the optional activities that may detract from proper focus on the family and the home.”⁴

At a crucial earlier time in Church history, Elder Harold B. Lee was assigned the daunting task of correlating what then were many diverse facets of the overall Church organization into its present unified form.

The insights he gained through that sacred assignment are most helpful to us today. In a conference message, President Lee gave this valuable counsel:

“The home is the basis of a righteous life. . . . Priesthood programs operate in support of the home; the auxiliary programs render valuable assistance. . . . [There is an] urgency of impressing the importance of better teaching and greater parental responsibility in the home. Much of what we do organizationally, then, is scaffolding, as we seek to build the individual, and we must not mistake the scaffolding for the soul.”⁵

President Lee also emphasized: “Priesthood leaders . . . are to strengthen the Church—to see that all Church members do their duty and that the auxiliaries do their utmost to do what that word . . . implies. An auxiliary is to be an aid to the priesthood in watching over the Church and also an aid to the home, under the direction and . . . cooperation [of] the priesthood.”⁶

President Lee further declared that Church programs should strengthen the home: “If there should ever come a time where . . . [Church] efforts should be so inclusive as to take all the time of the child . . . it would be a

tragic thing. . . . Ours should be a conscious every day effort . . . to reinforce and to strengthen the homes which are our Heavenly Father’s first line of defense.”⁷

President Hinckley has taught:

“We must work at our responsibility as parents as if everything in life counted on it, because in fact everything in life does count on it.

“If we fail in our homes, we fail in our lives. . . . Pray for guidance, for help, for direction, and then follow the whisperings of the Spirit to guide you in the most serious of all responsibilities, for the consequences of your leadership in your home will be eternal and everlasting.”⁸

In a general conference message in 1906, President Joseph F. Smith taught: “We expect to see the day . . . when every council of the Priesthood . . . will understand its duty, will assume its own responsibility, will magnify its calling . . . to the uttermost. . . . When that day shall come, there will not be so much necessity for work that is now being done by the auxiliary organizations, because it will be done by the regular quorums of the Priesthood.”⁹

Later, President Harold B. Lee made this clarifying explanation: “There has been some misunderstanding about that statement [of President Joseph F. Smith]. This did not mean that we would eliminate the auxiliaries heretofore established, but it meant that we would increase the responsibility of the priesthood quorums in strengthening these existing organizations by becoming more involved in order to give priesthood emphasis to every phase of the Lord’s work.”¹⁰

These principles stated by former Presidents of the Church govern the auxiliary organizations of the Church. They have been reiterated by subsequent First Presidencies. They con-

tinue to be the foundation of the Church auxiliary work.

Callings in Wards and Stakes

How are auxiliary organizations governed? I will describe the general principles of governance. Later in the broadcast, one way of applying these principles will be demonstrated.

All auxiliary organizations operate under the direct presidency and supervision of stake and ward priesthood authorities, who carry the ultimate responsibility for the work of these organizations.¹¹ By divine direction, stake presidents and bishops hold the keys of making callings in the respective organizations over which they preside and of giving guidance to those organizations. They hold the keys of receiving confirming revelation as to who should be called, and they are responsible for the calling, sustaining, and setting apart of officers and teachers.

Specifically, stake presidents are responsible for all Melchizedek Priesthood callings. Those callings include high priests and elders quorum officers, clerks, and executive secretary. Stake presidents are also responsible for the calling of stake auxiliary officers. Bishops are responsible for all Aaronic Priesthood callings and for the calling of all ward auxiliary officers.

Each auxiliary president is asked to recommend, after prayerful consideration, individuals to serve as counselors. When a presidency has been approved and called, recommendations for other officers, such as secretaries or teachers in a specific organization, should be made after prayerful evaluation by the full auxiliary presidency.

Because of the keys they hold, stake presidents and bishops can receive confirming revelation to proceed with such callings in accordance with the fifth article of faith.

This inspired pattern maintains order in the kingdom. It allows information not available to auxiliary officers who recommend candidates to be considered in seeking confirmation whether a call should be extended or not. A stake president or bishop has the keys of the Church in Israel and therefore knows of worthiness issues or other sensitive family concerns that are not public knowledge. Thus, an auxiliary president should seek the guidance of the Lord as to who should be recommended to specific positions while recognizing that it is only a recommendation.

While the stake president or bishop often receives a confirmation that the individual recommended should be called, that is not always the case. Each recommendation will be carefully evaluated, recognizing that it has been conscientiously considered and prayerfully identified.

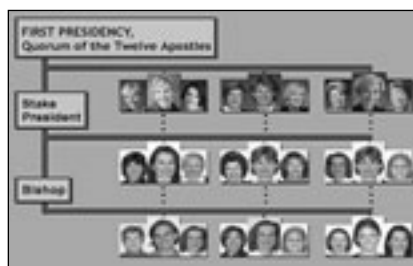
A stake president or bishop will normally consult closely with auxiliary leaders on individuals recommended to ensure that the full picture of an organization's needs is obtained before he prayerfully seeks confirmation of a calling. Then he will hold a worthiness interview and discussion with the individual prior to extending a call to serve.

Stake presidents and bishops, when you call a new presidency of an auxiliary organization, give them guidance and vision to orient their service. Meet with your counselors, and develop a statement of direction that you hope that they will follow to fulfill their assignment and to meet local needs. Share this vision with the new presidency. Ask them to prepare a plan for its implementation. A member of the presidency or bishopric should meet with them periodically to give further guidance and help them resolve any challenges they may have.

How to Serve

How should you serve? Follow the example of the auxiliary organizations at Church headquarters. They serve under the direction of their assigned General Authority priesthood officers. They meet together frequently to avoid duplication of effort, to simplify the guidance given, and to ensure that their materials are consistent with doctrine and Church policies. Excellent examples of how these cooperative efforts reduce the burdens on the membership of the Church are the recently published Faith in God program for boys and girls, prepared by the Primary, and the Duty to God and Young Women Personal Progress programs currently in use throughout the world.

Extraordinary effort was focused on these materials to make sure that they were simple, clear, and applicable around the world. They were worked on cooperatively with other headquarters auxiliaries. The other organizations have developed their materials in a similar way. When finalized, their efforts are reviewed and approved by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.



Auxiliary officers are presided over by their corresponding priesthood leaders at every level of Church government—at headquarters and at the stake and ward levels. The general officers of the auxiliary organizations at Church headquarters have occasional contact with the stake and ward officers they assist. These headquarters auxiliary officers, however,

do not preside over their corresponding field officers.

The general Church auxiliary officers maintain occasional contact with the field and make sure that the materials they develop for worldwide use are relevant, meet the needs of the corresponding auxiliary organization, and focus on strengthening the family in the home.

Follow the example of these headquarters organizations. As stake auxiliary officers, you will want to inform the stake presidency of your basic plans before they are implemented. Likewise at the ward level, you should share with the bishopric your plans before they are carried out. It is vitally important that auxiliary officers participate actively and effectively in the stake or ward council in which they function.

Stake presidencies and bishoprics, you should periodically meet separately with each auxiliary presidency under your guidance to understand and thereby be able to give inspired counsel and direction to their work.

This investment of time will strengthen the valuable support that each auxiliary organization can give to bless the families and individuals in the local stakes and wards.

Simplifying the Work

In the past the First Presidency has warned: "The work of the Church, in all fields, is standing in grave danger of being regimented down to the minutest detail. The result of that will be that not only will all initiative be crushed out but that all opportunity for the working of the spirit will be eliminated. The Church has not been built on that principle. In all their work, the Auxiliaries must not only give opportunity for initiative, but . . . must encourage it."¹²

May I give you a word of caution as you plan your activities. Make sure that the essential needs are met, but

do not go overboard in creating so many good things to do that the essential ones are not accomplished. I will share an example. Recently an enthusiastic stake Relief Society presidency decided to take advantage of the worldwide women's meeting broadcast from Church headquarters. On the day of the conference, they organized a four-hour training session for the ward Relief Society presidencies, then had a formal, sit-down dinner which, of course, those local Relief Society presidents prepared, served, and cleaned up. By the time the Relief Society broadcast was received, those sisters' minds were full to overflowing. They could not have gained the maximum benefit from that carefully prepared broadcast. Remember, don't magnify the work to be done—simplify it.

Have you received a recent calling and feel overwhelmed? Remember how easy it sounded when someone described how to play a piano or to swim? Then when you tried to do that, or any other challenging task, how complicated it seemed.

Remember how as you persisted it became more comfortable and much easier to manage? As you diligently serve, the Lord will help you in like manner with your new calling.

There is an irrigation analogy normally used in the Church of "getting the water to the end of the row." However, at stake and ward levels, it would be far better for you priesthood leaders and auxiliary officers to simply "let it rain" from heaven. Your sacred callings give you the divine right to inspiration. Confidently seek it. Wherever you live in the world, in the smallest branch or the largest ward, a struggling district or a fully organized stake, you have the right to be guided in fulfilling your inspired assignment to best meet the needs of those you serve.

Fellow workers in the kingdom of God on earth, we love you. We pray for you. We pray that you will be inspired and will find success and profound joy in fulfilling your sacred assignments.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. "Memorandum of Suggestions," Mar. 29, 1940, 2.
3. See First Presidency letter, Dec. 7, 1990.
4. "Living the Gospel in the Home," *Ensign*, May 1978, 101.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 107; or *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1968, 31.
6. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, comp. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 263.
7. "Primary Fundamentals for Primary Workers and Parents," *Children's Friend*, Aug. 1950, 342.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 109–10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 100.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1906, 3.
10. *Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 263.
11. See First Presidency letter, Jan. 13, 1923.
12. "Memorandum of Suggestions," Mar. 29, 1940, 4.

BONNIE D. PARKIN

Relief Society General President

SUSAN W. TANNER

Young Women General President

COLEEN K. MENLOVE

Primary General President

The Purposes of the Auxiliaries



Unity of Purpose

Sister Parkin

What a blessing for Sister Tanner, Sister Menlove, and me, Sister Parkin, to be here with you today. Sister Coleen Menlove is the general president of the Primary. Sister Susan Tanner is the general president of Young Women.

All of us in the Church are called to serve the Lord, no matter where we live. We each have a sacred assignment to help families and individuals come unto Jesus Christ. That's our mission. In just a couple of words, let's talk about the objectives of Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society.

Sister Menlove

In Primary we help children develop testimonies of Jesus Christ.

Sister Tanner

And in Young Women we prepare the young women to come unto Jesus Christ.

Sister Parkin

Relief Society is all about helping women and families come unto Jesus Christ. We want all to feel the love of Jesus Christ in their lives.

Sister Tanner

I'm grateful that we are so unified in our purposes, and I'm also very grateful that we have the privilege of serving together under the direction

of the priesthood. We really do see the Lord's hand in what we do, and we bear testimony that it works.

Sister Menlove

It does work. What a privilege it is to be doing our part. I can't help but think of President Hinckley's statement in our recent conference, "We are all working as one in a great cause."¹

Sister Parkin

Today we want to show you three short vignettes, and then we want to discuss them. The first one demonstrates receiving a call from the Lord through a priesthood leader, the second shows an auxiliary presidency meeting, and the third represents reporting back to a priesthood leader. Then we want to take just a minute or two and talk about those clips and what we learn from them and how we can serve the Lord in better ways.

Sister Tanner

Let's watch this first one together, and you will see a bishop extending a call to a sister. While you're watching, observe several things. Watch how the bishop addresses the needs of the family and the concerns of the sister, and then notice what part revelation plays in that calling.

Vignette 1— A Calling to Serve



Bishop Barker

Hello, Sister Jensen.

Sister Jensen

Hi, Bishop.

Bishop Barker

Hello, Brother Jensen.

Thank you for coming. Please tell me, how is your family?

Sister Jensen

I think we're doing great. Jenny seems to be loving life, like any 15-year-old should, and Grant has transitioned to a new school and has made some new friends, so we're feeling better about his direction. Our missionary is doing well. He writes that he is enjoying his mission. Japanese is a hard language, but he's working hard at it.

Bishop Barker

I'm sure he's a wonderful missionary. You're both raising a wonderful family, and you're a great strength in our ward.

Sister Jensen, I appreciated the temple recommend interview we had last week. I'm grateful that you're a worthy temple recommend holder and that things are in order in your home. I want to thank you for all that you've done as the compassionate service leader in the Relief Society. You, Sister Jensen, have been a great blessing in the lives of many sisters in our ward.

You know, it's interesting. You've been in my mind lately, and it's become very clear to me what the Lord now wants you to do—and that is to bless the lives of some of the younger sisters in our ward.

As a bishopric we presented your name to the Lord, and He has confirmed our initial feeling that you, Sister Jensen, should be the new Young Women president in the ward. The reason I invited you both here today is to extend this call to you to serve as the president of the Young Women organization in our ward. I want you to know that this is a call from the Lord.

Sister Jensen

Oh my, Bishop. I've never worked with the young women before.

Bishop Barker

I can appreciate your concern. You actually have—in your own home. Every time I see you interact with Jenny, I see a mother who is guided by the Lord. You've done a wonderful job, and you will be a wonderful example to the young women here in our ward, especially as they transition from youth to womanhood.

Sister Jensen

Well, I have a testimony of Jesus Christ and His work, and I do love the young women. I'd be happy to accept this call, but I have to admit I'm really overwhelmed.

Bishop Barker

You're a faithful sister, and I know that He will be with you. Brother Jensen, will you support your wife as she serves as the president of the Young Women organization here in our ward?

Brother Jensen

Bishop, I've been very grateful to Marcie for all the support she has given me; I'd be delighted to support her in this calling.

Bishop Barker

That's wonderful.

Sister Jensen

Bishop, what's your biggest concern for the young women in our ward?

Bishop Barker

That's a great question. I am really concerned about the youth being committed to living God's standards. As you and your presidency begin meeting together, I would like you to make this a high priority. Consider how you can help parents teach youth gospel standards.

Sister Jensen

What about counselors?

Bishop Barker

I would like you to recommend a few sisters who would work well with you and with the young women.

Think about recommending women who have life skills they could share, whose testimonies and experiences would help young women transition into womanhood. And then let's talk about it.

As soon as we have extended all the calls to your counselors, we would like to set you apart as a presidency. Brother Jensen, you would be invited to be with us. And before you leave tonight, I'd like to give you some materials that you are going to need. I am sure you have lots of questions going through your mind.

Sister Jensen

I do.

Bishop Barker

This will help you. I'm going to have my counselor Brother Franks get in communication with you. He will have regular monthly meetings with you. He will be able to go over any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your time.

Discussion— Elements of the Calling

Sister Tanner

That brought back memories. There is something sacred and never to be forgotten about a call to serve the Lord.

Let's look at some of the key elements of this interview. First, the bishop was warm, caring, and loving. It was really obvious that he knew these people and loved them; he respected their commitment to the gospel. Second, he had prepared beforehand by holding a worthiness interview and ensuring that Sister Jensen's family circumstances permitted her to serve. He emphasized the family, just like President Faust has taught us today. He asked about the children. He commended Sister Jensen's commitment in her home when he said, "You're raising a great family." All our families are imperfect, but I think this new president came

away feeling hope and confidence in her responsibility of raising a family.

I remember when I was called, my husband, John, reaffirmed his love for me and his support for me in my calling. He was saying that to a priesthood leader, but it was so important for me, his wife, to hear.

Sister Menlove

It is so important to feel the support of family. And there's one more point. The bishop made sure that Sister Jensen had the necessary handbooks and materials and arranged for a regular meeting between her and a bishopric counselor.

Sister Parkin

It is important that you get the handbook. And then that regular meeting time needs to be there. Remember, too, the great value of stake auxiliary leaders and auxiliary presidencies. They can help train the new ward presidency so that they can do the work that needs to go forward.

What stood out the very most in my mind about what we just saw was when the bishop said, "The Lord has prepared you for this in your home." What we do in our homes and in the Church to invite the Spirit, to teach the gospel, and to live the standards influences the lives of generations to come. This work we are doing is all about redeeming God's children. It is about parents. It is about families. It is about widows, single sisters, youth, and converts.

Sister Tanner

We really are called to serve each person. When we receive a call, it is vital to voice acceptance of the call and then receive direction and vision from a priesthood leader. I know I felt so overwhelmed and unequal to my call to the Young Women presidency, but I did say, "I have a testimony, and I can work hard."

President Hinckley gave me clear direction. He was obviously very concerned about the young women

of the Church. He said, "We cannot let them fall through the cracks." And then I knew what it was he wanted me to accomplish. It's that direction, that vision, and that guidance that is important to an auxiliary officer.

Sister Menlove

I was impressed by the direction given by the bishop. When I was called to serve in the Primary, I received direction from one of my priesthood leaders to represent the prophet, his teachings, and his revelations to the leaders and the children of the Church. I feel such a sacred responsibility to fulfill that assignment.

Sister Parkin

I think everyone who receives a call believes he or she doesn't have the skills to do it. Every one of us feels like that. I specifically remember that when President Hinckley called me, he said, "I want you to know that the Brethren have confidence in you. We all agree that the Lord has called you, and He will help you do this." To know that the Lord has called you makes all the difference in the service that you give. As President Monson often says, "Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies."²

Sister Menlove

That is so true. When you know that the Lord has called you, then you know He will continue to inspire you and He will help you succeed.

Sister Tanner

That's right. That interview was also important because it established a trust between the bishop and the new president. When you feel that the Lord has confidence in you and your priesthood leader has confidence in you and your family is supporting you, then you can go forward.

We know what President Hinckley says, "Do the best you can." And then he says, "Be a little better than you

have been." And you come away saying, "Yes! I can do that."

Sister Parkin

Now let's look at the next vignette, about a Relief Society presidency meeting. Let's watch what the sisters do to make this meeting effective.

Vignette 2— Presidency Meeting



Sister Call

Thank you, Sister Yamada, for that beautiful prayer. The Spirit touched me deeply as you spoke.

Sister Jenkins, you have the scripture thought today.

Sister Jenkins

I do. I know that as a presidency we have talked about unity and working as one. When I was studying my scriptures this morning, I came across something that Father Lehi said. It struck me deeply, and I thought, "I have got to share this with you." He said, "Be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things" (2 Nephi 1:21). It made such an impression on me. I liked the emphasis on "determined" and on "united" and on being of one mind and of one heart. Sometimes I choose my own way, and it draws me away from being of one mind and one heart, but I want you to know, Sister Call, that I've made it my goal to support you all the way because I know that you support our bishop. That way we can all be knit together and have unity and love within our presidency and with our sisters.

Sister Call

Thank you for those tender thoughts. When we are unified, the Lord can work miracles through us. I appreciate the support the three of you give me. I trust you. I trust your judgment and your inspiration.

The most pressing issue on today's agenda is discussing the bishop's directive—how we can help parents teach moral standards to our youth.

Sister Barber, I know you've been working on this.

Sister Barber

Our committee for home, family, and personal enrichment has really come up with some great ideas. The first one is that they want to have the Primary leaders teach some of the Relief Society sisters what they call "My Gospel Standards." Here's one of them: "I will dress modestly to show respect for Heavenly Father and myself."³

We thought about maybe having a class where the sisters teach the young girls how to make a skirt. We thought that would be a really good idea. Another one of the ideas that the committee suggested was to invite some of the young women to discuss their Personal Progress plans.

I read through the Personal Progress book, and I came across the Choice and Accountability value. In here it says, "List in your journal each standard of righteous behavior the [For the Strength of Youth] pamphlet outlines, and record why it is important to live those standards."⁴

We could have a great panel discussion with some of the sisters and the young women about television, music, books, and other media.

Sister Call

Sister Jenkins.

Sister Jenkins

You know, I think that's a great idea, because when my grandchildren come over I'll have a knowledge of what they're learning and can discuss

some of these things with them. They will think I am really up to speed.

Sister Call

Sister Yamada.

Sister Yamada

I could give the committee a list of all the mothers who have daughters in Young Women, and mothers and daughters can participate together.

Sister Call

Great ideas. I think we're getting there. I will take these ideas to the bishop when I have my regular meeting this month. We've got to keep in mind ways, as President Hinckley asked us in October conference, to help lighten the load of our bishop.⁵ Let's always keep that in mind.

Before we conclude, I have a simple request. When you go home today, will you thank your families? Thank them for their support. And thank them from me. Tell them that in evening prayers in our home, my husband and I pray for all of you.

Discussion— Trust, Unity, and the Spirit

Sister Parkin

In any presidency there needs to be unity and trust. You need to counsel together, and you need to feel the Spirit of the Lord with what you do. You need to follow the direction of priesthood leaders, and you need to focus on helping families. All these things were at work in this meeting.

Sister Menlove

I love your thought about families. When we were called as a new presidency, we talked about sharing our experiences with our families whenever possible. Our family has enjoyed an abundance of blessings as a result of my calling, including a greater understanding that prayers are answered. Our family has prayed and fasted for me and for the work that I've been asked to do. They support

and encourage me because they know that this is the Lord's work.

Sister Parkin

It makes such a difference in a presidency meeting that before you start to address all the challenges and issues, you have a prayer together. Prayer brings a unity and a love, because if you listen to a sister pray, I really believe you know her heart differently. Reading a verse of scripture and applying it to the work invites the Spirit in a presidency meeting. And the Spirit guides you. In our presidency we are also studying the words of the prophet from the general conference. We know that if we keep the words of the prophet in front of us, we'll be able to do what we need to do. So first we prepare spiritually, and very often we go to the handbook. It's a guide for us.

Sister Tanner

We do the same in our meeting. When you start with a prayer and a scripture, you invite the Spirit. We trust in the Lord then, and we trust in each other. By inviting that Spirit, we will receive the vision and the inspiration to know where it is that we need to go.

Sister Parkin

I remember President Hinckley saying to me, "I want you to recommend counselors who are women of faith, and I want unity in your presidency." Every time I sit with my counselors I feel such a reassurance. The Lord called these women, and I value their counsel. We strive to make all our decisions together, with the help of the Lord. There is sacred power in presidencies. You've felt it; I've felt it.

Sister Menlove

There is. And that's the pattern we follow when we meet with priesthood leaders as well. We share our thoughts and our recommendations with priesthood leaders just as counselors assist a president.

Sister Parkin

You noticed that the presidency worked from an agenda, just a simple list of items to be discussed. The agenda created order, and it moved them through the meeting. That needs to happen. An agenda helps you stay focused, and it helps you use that time wisely. Time is so important to us. And I love the part where you leave with action items. You know what you're going to do. You've got an assignment. Therefore, go and do.

Sister Menlove

And sisters and brothers need to use the existing programs, tools, and resources provided by the Church. We don't need to go out and create another program.

Sister Parkin

You're right. In Relief Society, for example, we have home, family, and personal enrichment. We have visiting teaching. We have Sunday lessons. We have welfare. We just need to use what's already in place to follow the direction of priesthood leaders.

Sister Tanner

That's right. We've got great programs that assist us.

I was reading in the recent conference edition of the *Ensign*. It was the talk President Hinckley gave at the priesthood session when he invited "every member of the Church to do all that he or she can to lift the burden under which our bishops and branch presidents labor."⁶

I think some of the ways that we can do that is to communicate with them and report our progress. I especially love that President Hinckley mentioned that we thank our priesthood leaders and pray for them.

Sister Parkin

I just want to bring up one more thing that I think is really important as you work in presidencies. In a presidency you need to keep confidences. Indiscretions can ruin lives.

It is so important that the information discussed in that private, individual room where you're together in that meeting stays there. It is that attitude, "Your name is safe in my home." Keeping confidences builds unity, and it builds trust. We have to keep focused on our purpose to help individuals come unto Jesus Christ.

Sister Menlove

There is one more vignette, and it is in Spanish. It's a Primary presidency reporting back to their priesthood leader. Watch for the accountability and the willingness to help the bishop.

**Vignette 3—
Counseling Together**



Sister Vasquez

My counselors and I really appreciated meeting with the bishopric last month. Now we have a few things we would like to discuss with you. First, we're very excited about what happened in Primary last Sunday. Alicia Gonzalez spoke, and her mother, Angela, came to hear her. We hadn't seen Angela in church for a long time. She had tears in her eyes as she listened. I think she felt something.

It is so clear to me that children can reach their parents spiritually in a way no one else can.

Brother Torres

Thank you. I'll tell the bishop. He will be very excited. He may want to share it with the family's home teachers and Angela's visiting teachers.

Sister Vasquez

Thank you. You are probably aware that Sister Benites and her

family are moving, which means we need a new nursery leader. We have been thinking of two sisters—Maria Hernandez and Gloria Gonzalez. We think that either of them would be a good choice. When we prayed, we felt good about them both.

Brother Torres

They are good sisters. I'll write down their names and share these recommendations in our bishopric meeting this week. I will call you back and let you know what the bishop thinks.

Sister Vasquez

Thank you. It is so important for the children—particularly the little ones—that all the teachers be called. With new families moving in, we also have an updated list of children who are preparing for baptism. We have a copy for the bishopric. Also, we would like to invite you to come to sharing time one of these Sundays. Our subject is why we live gospel standards and how they help us feel joy and peace.

Brother Torres

Certainly. I should be able to come on the third Sunday. I would also like to visit briefly the 8-to-11-year-old class.

Sister Vasquez

That would be wonderful. It is so helpful when a member of the bishopric visits; many of the children don't have priesthood leadership in their homes. Your little Jose and Marcia will be excited too.

Brother Torres

I'll make sure it's okay with the bishop, but I think you can count on me.

Sister Vasquez

We've been thinking about the bishop's request for us to help parents teach moral values. What if we focus on "My Gospel Standards" with the older Primary children? We can teach them that living these stan-

dards will prepare them to live the principles in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet.

Would it be possible to ask home teachers and visiting teachers to reinforce the standard, “I will only read and watch things that are pleasing to Heavenly Father”?⁷ As you know, the media is such a challenge for children today.

Brother Torres

That’s a great idea. I’ll bring it up in our next ward council, and you can be ready to share the idea in that meeting.

Sister Vasquez

I will. Thank you.

Discussion— Reporting and Accountability

Sister Menlove

A regular meeting with a priesthood leader is an opportunity to account for what we’ve been asked to do.

Sister Parkin

I love that the Primary president started out with a success story. Just last week we met with our priesthood leader, and we shared one of our little miracles with him. I think it brought him renewed strength. I saw him respond to it, and it was really joyous to watch. We are assisting him, and he is so invested in what we are doing in this great work.

Sister Tanner

Exactly. I think a priesthood leader is entitled to know about successes because he loves these people too and is working for them. When we share these with him, it is one of the ways we assist him. It works.

Sister Menlove

It does work. And the interaction with this Primary presidency and the bishopric member shows a great deal of mutual respect. You can tell that they worked together often. In this meeting they aren’t going to waste

time. They have prayed and they have planned. The sisters came prepared. They were ready with recommendations.

Sister Tanner

Yes, and I also think they understood the order of the Church. The presidency makes recommendations with names for callings, and they trust the Lord will confirm to the bishopric whom He has prepared to serve in that calling.

Sister Menlove

I also appreciated how the bishopric member planned to visit Primary. That shows his love for the children, and it shows the importance of that auxiliary in the Church. He has been there before, you can tell, and he is interested in what is happening with the 11-year-olds. There is joy in knowing that you aren’t serving alone. We are helping priesthood leaders and parents—especially parents—teach children the gospel.

The Blessings of a Calling

Sister Tanner

What I like about all these vignettes is I feel like they have shown the right way to do things in the Church. When we are out training, often people will ask us questions. And when we respond, we ask questions back. We say, “Have you prayed and taken it to the Lord? What do your priesthood leaders counsel you to do? What does the handbook tell you?” These are three sure guides to success as we strive to serve the Lord.

Sister Parkin

When you serve, you are promised blessings, and I want you to know that I’ve experienced those blessings. I testify of them. I’ve experienced them. I know that they are real. My family has been blessed because of my calling.

Today we’ve highlighted some of the essentials of serving in the auxiliaries. Think about some of the things we’ve talked about. We’ve talked about trust. We’ve talked about unity, accountability, and joy. We’ve talked about assisting priesthood leaders in helping families and individuals come unto Jesus Christ. This work is about love for each other and, most of all, love for the Lord. Being with you today has been such a blessing for us. We live and we serve all over the world, and yet we are all united in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is extraordinary. Now we’d just like to close with our testimonies. Sister Menlove.

Sister Menlove

A call to serve is a sacred trust from the Lord. It is an opportunity to feel the Savior’s love in greater depth—His love for us and His love for those we serve. My family has been so blessed by priesthood and auxiliary leaders who love the Lord.

I have felt such great joy as I have witnessed your love for the children and their families. I am grateful for the desires of your hearts that all, including children, come to know that we have a loving Heavenly Father who hears and answers our prayers and that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer.

I know that His gospel was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that the heavens are open and that we have a living prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley. I know this to be true. I know this through a witness of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Tanner

I am so grateful for the privilege of assisting the priesthood in the wonderful work of strengthening families and helping them come unto Christ. It is such a blessing for me to see the Lord’s hand in all that we do and to know that He loves and cares for each of us individually. I know the

Lord calls us to serve and He magnifies us in that service, no matter how weak and simple we may feel we are.

It is a rich blessing to watch young women grow and progress into womanhood, prepared to fulfill their most sacred roles in their homes and families. I know that families are “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”⁸

I know that Jesus Christ lives, that He loves us, and that we have His restored gospel upon the earth today with apostles and prophets and all the priesthood keys to seal families to each other and to the Lord.

I testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Parkin

We serve in three separate auxiliaries, but we love serving together. We love each other.

I have a testimony of the power of a prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley. I am thankful for him, for his love, and for all priesthood leaders who have shown confidence in the sisters in this Church.

As we have talked about the work of auxiliaries, I have thought so much about how the Lord loves the women of His Church. I believe He loves their willingness to serve in any capacity; they desire simply to serve Him. If I could have only one thing happen for the women of the Church, it would be that they know that the Lord loves them and that they feel His love in their lives daily.

I personally have felt the Lord’s love in my life, and I am so thankful for that. I testify of my Savior, Jesus Christ. I know He lives. I have felt His guidance, and I have felt the peace that He promises to every one of us.

I testify of these things in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. In Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 82.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 62; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.
3. *Faith in God for Boys* (2003), 22; or *Faith in God for Girls* (2003), 22.
4. *Young Women Personal Progress* (2001), 41.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 60.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 65.
7. *Faith in God for Boys*, 22; or *Faith in God for Girls*, 22.
8. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Priesthood and the Auxiliaries



Fundamental Principles

Greetings from the Republic of the Philippines, where we are working to establish the Church in the only Christian nation in Asia. Because of rapid growth, we have over 200,000 first-generation members of the Church and many new and inexperienced leaders. In this circumstance, we must focus on fundamental principles of Church doctrine and government.

As I speak of these fundamentals, I am joined by five of our Philippine leaders, whom I have asked to be my immediate audience. Each of them represents thousands of others with similar responsibilities in this great

audience of priesthood and auxiliary leaders. My associates are a stake president, Raul Edgardo Vicencio, of our Makati Stake; a bishop, Michael Ramirez, from our Cainta Stake; a Relief Society president, Filipina Fernandez, from our Pasay Stake; a Young Women president, Liza Enciso, from our Quezon City South Stake; and a Primary president, Grace Teh, from our Antipolo Stake. Thanks to all of you for your presence here and for your wonderful service.

Our subject is the priesthood and the auxiliaries, but we cannot speak of either of these subjects without speaking also of the family. We will be making frequent reference to the family, which is both the foundation and the intended beneficiary of the work of the priesthood and the auxiliaries.

We begin by affirming three fundamental doctrinal principles. First, both the Church and the eternal family are presided over by priesthood authority. The government and the procedures of the Church and the family are different, but the foundation of authority—the priesthood—is the same.

Second, the Church organization and the family organization support one another. Each is independent in its own sphere, but each has the same mission—to help accomplish

God's purpose to bring to pass the eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39).

Third, the Latter-day Saint family and the Church both draw their nourishment and their direction from our Lord Jesus Christ. The Savior taught, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).



Here is a branch, which I gathered on my way to this meeting. What happens to this branch now that it has been separated from the main vine? Obviously, it will die. It certainly cannot bear fruit. As Jesus taught: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4).

If the Church of Jesus Christ and the family are to bear fruit, they must abide in our Savior, Jesus Christ. The same is true of each of their members. This means that all of us must keep His commandments and follow His teachings and His appointed servants.

The Origins of Three Auxiliaries

The First Presidency has told us: "The family and the home are the foundation of the righteous life. . . . The Church auxiliaries are organized to assist the individual, the family, and the priesthood in realizing divine expectations."¹

Let us look at the origin and mission of each of these three auxiliaries.

The Relief Society was organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo in 1842. Some leading women of Nauvoo proposed a written constitution, but the Prophet said he would give them “something better”—he would organize them “under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood.”²

This organization would be for spiritual purposes, “not only to relieve the poor, but to save souls.”³ The Prophet said, “The organization of the Church . . . was never perfect until the women were organized.”⁴ The organization of the Relief Society gave women an official capacity in the Church and helped prepare them for great responsibilities to come, including working in the temple and teaching the gospel.

What we now call Young Women was organized by President Brigham Young about 30 years later to give young women increased opportunities to learn the gospel and develop greater strength to keep the commandments and reject the destructive ways of the world. The new organization soon became known by a name that stated its purpose: the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association.

About 10 years later, under President John Taylor, the necessity to teach children the gospel was recognized in the organization of what was called the Primary Association.

At about this same time, the needs of young men to learn the gospel, to serve, and to prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood caused them to begin to be ordained and organized into quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Parents and Church Leaders

The scriptures command us to “put on the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Modern revelation describes this armor as including the covering of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation (see D&C 27:16–18). Children and youth must be fitted out with that armor.

The sacred duty of fitting children and youth with the armor of God is given to fathers and mothers and other family members, assisted by the priesthood and auxiliary organizations of the Church.

Directed by Priesthood Authority

In performing their vital tasks, the Relief Society, the Young Women, the Primary, and the quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood work under the direction of priesthood authority. Many years ago the First Presidency declared, “We wish . . . to have it clearly understood that all auxiliary associations operate under the direct presidency and supervision of stake and ward priesthood authorities, who carry the ultimate responsibility for the work of these organizations.”⁵

This means that all who work in the auxiliary organizations must have hands placed upon their heads to give them the authority to lead and teach in the kingdom of God. It also means that the priesthood authorities who preside over the auxiliary organizations must direct and supervise their work. Stake presidents and bishops and branch presidents must not just turn the work of the auxiliaries over to auxiliary leaders and teachers to do whatever they choose to do.

The work of the auxiliaries, like the work of quorums and other Church organizations, is to strengthen the family and the home, as Elder Scott reminded us earlier. Melchizedek

Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies do this primarily by teaching parents, “exhorting them to . . . attend to all family duties,” the Lord said in a revelation (D&C 20:51; see also v. 47).

The Young Women and the Primary strengthen the family and the home principally by teaching youth and children and by leading them in appropriate activities.

Like parents, Church leaders and teachers are under the Lord’s command to teach from the scriptures, “in the which is the fulness of the gospel” (D&C 42:12). This divine mission can be accomplished only if auxiliary leaders and teachers seek and follow priesthood direction and if priesthood leaders provide leadership, understanding, and support for auxiliary programs.

Application of Principles

Now let us speak of some practical application of these principles to the varying conditions of a worldwide Church.

In the *Church Handbook of Instructions*, stake presidents and bishops are directed to meet regularly with their Relief Society presidents.⁶ Their assigned counselors are directed to meet regularly with the presidents of the Young Women and Primary.⁷ Brethren, the duty to meet regularly means more than meeting once a year.

Similarly, the bishopric is directed to meet with all three of these auxiliary presidents at least monthly in the ward council meeting. There the bishopric instructs them on doctrine and duties. There the priesthood and auxiliary leaders counsel together on how to improve gospel instruction and activities in the ward and how to strengthen individuals and families spiritually.⁸

If priesthood leaders do not meet with auxiliary leaders, or if priesthood

leaders do not adequately direct and supervise auxiliary programs, the teachings or activities of the auxiliaries can depart from what the Lord has commanded. The same deviations can occur if auxiliary leaders are not faithful in following the direction of their priesthood leaders.

For example, I have observed deviations like the following, either here in the Philippines or in other places in the world:

1. I have heard auxiliary leaders grieve that their bishops or branch presidents never meet with them. This failure violates the fundamental directions to “meet regularly,” which I quoted just a moment ago. It is imperative that priesthood leaders hold those regular meetings with the auxiliary leaders, as we have just seen modeled in the vignette the general presidents discussed. Auxiliary presidents should also be invited to ward councils, which should be held at least monthly.
2. I have also heard auxiliary officers grieve that their priesthood leaders do not call or set apart auxiliary officers and teachers. “They don’t care about us,” is the impression given. It is imperative that priesthood leaders are diligent in calling the needed auxiliary leaders, as we have just seen modeled in the other video vignette the sisters discussed.
3. I have seen Primary children placed in a single room for Sunday morning treats and entertainment. That is not Primary. Primary is teaching children the gospel with music and spiritual messages and the loving spiritual stimulation of sharing time.
4. Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood holders might be offered nothing but weekly boredom in a classroom or unplanned midweek activities like playing basketball or

roaming around a shopping mall or chattering in the chapel. That kind of Mutual activity does not measure up to the standard of inspired teaching and activities planned with a purpose.

5. I have seen some teachers in Relief Society and priesthood classes teaching their own hobbies or preoccupations instead of the subjects designated by an inspired curriculum for these classes.
6. Without firm and inspired priesthood direction, any Church organization (or activity) can be turned into a personal possession to fill the needs or gratify the pride or vain ambition (see D&C 121:37) of its officers and teachers. This is what the Apostle Paul cautioned against when he told the Roman Saints to avoid those who “cause[d] divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which [they] have learned.” Even though such persons use “good words and fair speeches,” he cautioned, they “deceive the hearts of the simple” and “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly” (Romans 16:17–18).

Adapted to Circumstances

The organization and work of our Church auxiliaries are defined in the *Church Handbook of Instructions*. Let us consider how these handbook directions are to be applied.

The full auxiliary organizations and the full auxiliary programs outlined in the handbook are the ideal. However, in a worldwide Church, including some branches and wards here in the Philippines, there are circumstances where only part of this can be done.

We must remember that circumstances and resources are very different in different parts of the world. For example, in some locations our Church members have many

resources of time and transportation for Church activities. These resource-rich locations are not free from opposition, however, because in these locations many outside opportunities compete for the attention of our members. In other locations our members work long hours six days a week, or they can barely afford to pay the cost of public transportation to Church meetings. In these locations there may be few competing opportunities, but the shortage of resources makes midweek meetings and activities difficult or impossible.

Our Church auxiliaries have greater flexibility on organizations and programs than priesthood organizations. For example, the scriptures give no latitude to deviate from priesthood ordinances (like the sacrament or the temple) or to depart from priesthood organizations like quorums and branches, wards, and stakes. Similarly, there is no latitude in the requirement of marriage of a man and a woman to provide the government of the family. These priesthood ordinances and organizations must be uniform worldwide.

In contrast, the auxiliaries that support these priesthood organizations are more flexible in how they are organized and in which activities they carry out to provide their support. Their flexibility, of course, must be exercised under the direction of their priesthood leaders.

Elder L. Tom Perry gave us a good example of this a year ago in the first worldwide leadership training meeting. His instructions about flexibility in organizations and activities apply with particular force to the auxiliaries. You remember his teaching us that priesthood leaders should take an inventory of the needs of the members and the number of active leaders in a unit—ward or branch. Then, he said, “build your program based on the leadership available and the

needs of your members. . . . Grow only as fast as the size and maturity of your unit permit.”⁹ This teaching has been of great benefit to us here in the Philippines. As it is understood and applied, I am sure it will be of great benefit in many other locations where there are small and struggling branches and wards.

President Hinckley has given us the basic principle to guide all of us in the many different circumstances we face: “Do the best that you can. That is all we ask of you,” he said. “Do the best that you can. The Lord doesn’t expect you to do more than that. Just do the very best you can.”¹⁰

Brothers and sisters, the priesthood of God is the foundation of authority in the Church and the family. This authority governs and serves both men and women. The scriptures teach that the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 11:11). So it is in the Church and in the family. We must move forward, hand-in-hand, working together in the great mission of our Heavenly Father, to bring to pass the eternal life of man. I testify of the truth of these things and of the divinity of our Savior, Jesus Christ, whose Atonement and whose authority make it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. First Presidency letter, Dec. 7, 1990.
2. In Jill Mulvay Derr and others, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (1992), 27.
3. *History of the Church*, 5:25.
4. In Derr, *Women of Covenant*, 41.
5. First Presidency letter, Jan. 13, 1923.
6. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 194, 196.
7. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, 216, 229–30, 231.
8. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, 317.
9. “Basic Unit Program,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 9.
10. American Fork, Utah, regional conference, Aug. 25, 2002.

PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Standing Strong and Immovable



Stemming the Tide

My beloved brethren and sisters, this has been a very interesting and a very important meeting. It has dealt essentially with the work of the auxiliary organizations led by the women. As has been indicated, there are, of course, two other auxiliary organizations—the Young Men and the Sunday School. These will be dealt with at another time.

But this present emphasis on the work of the Relief Society, the Young Women, and the Primary is timely and very much needed.

No one need tell you that we are living in a very difficult season in the history of the world. Standards are

dropping everywhere. Nothing seems to be sacred any more.

As President Faust has indicated, the family appears to be falling apart. The traditional family is under heavy attack. I do not know that things were worse in the times of Sodom and Gomorrah. At that season, Abraham bargained with the Lord to save these cities for the sake of the righteous. Notwithstanding his pleas, things were so bad that Jehovah decreed their destruction. They and their wicked inhabitants were annihilated. We see similar conditions today. They prevail all across the world. I think our Father must weep as He looks down upon His wayward sons and daughters.

In the Church we are working very hard to stem the tide of this evil. But it is an uphill battle, and we sometimes wonder whether we are making any headway. But we are succeeding in a substantial way. We see so many of our youth who are faithful and true and who look to us for encouragement and direction.

We must not give up. We must not become discouraged. We must never surrender to the forces of evil. We can and must maintain the standards for which this Church has stood since it was organized. There is a better way than the way of the world. If it means standing alone, we must do it.

But we shall not be alone. I am confident that there are millions of people throughout the world who grieve over the evil they see about them. They love the virtuous, the good, and the uplifting. They too will raise their voices and give of their strength to the preservation of those values which are worthy of maintenance and cultivation.

A Bright Hope

It is so tremendously important that the women of the Church stand strong and immovable for that which is correct and proper under the plan of the Lord. I am convinced there is no other organization anywhere to match the Relief Society of this Church. It has a membership of more than five million women across the earth. If they will be united and speak with one voice, their strength will be incalculable.

We call upon the women of the Church to stand together for righteousness. They must begin in their own homes. They can teach it in their classes. They can voice it in their communities.

They must be the teachers and the guardians of their daughters. Those daughters must be taught in the Primary and in the classes of the Young Women of the values of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When you save a girl, you save generations. She will grow in strength and righteousness. She will marry in the house of the Lord. She will teach her children the ways of truth. They will walk in her paths and will similarly teach their children. Wonderful grandmothers will be there to lend encouragement.

I see this as the one bright shining hope in a world that is marching toward self-destruction.

To you stake presidents and bishops, we plead with you to give encouragement and help in every

possible way to the women and the girls of your stakes and wards. They need your priesthood backing. They need your leadership and counsel. Help them in every way that you can, and while doing so you will help yourselves.

For instance, it is imperative that bishops work closely with Relief Society presidents in administering Church welfare. This is normally accomplished in the monthly ward welfare committee meeting or, on occasion, in the ward council meeting. But emergencies arise, or there may be circumstances where greater confidentiality is required, in which case the bishop and the Relief Society president should consult together. Wherever there is material need in a family, the Relief Society president is best qualified to go into the home and assess the family's needs.

The Strength of Women

We frequently speak of the strength of the priesthood, and properly so. But we must never lose sight of the strength of the women. It is mothers who set the tone of the home. It is mothers who most directly affect the lives of their children. It is mothers who teach infants to pray, who read to them choice and beautiful literature from the scriptures and other sources. It is mothers who nurture them and bring them up in the ways of the Lord. Their influence is paramount.

President Heber J. Grant went so far as to say, "Without the devotion and absolute testimony of the living God in the hearts of our mothers this Church would die."¹

The writer of Proverbs said, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

It is a true saying that "as the twig is bent, so the tree is inclined."

We frequently speak of our wives as the better half. It is essentially true. They are the creators of life. They are the nurturers of children. They are the teachers of young women. They are our indispensable companions. They are our co-workers in building the kingdom of God. How great is their role, how marvelous their contribution. How they add to the luster of life.

Prayer and Work

We have a greater challenge than we realize. As Paul declared, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Never lose sight of the great reassuring power of the Atonement of the Savior to lift and save. Through that Atonement comes forgiveness for past offenses and strength for righteous living.

I have been quoted as saying, "Do the best you can." But I want to emphasize that it be the very best. We are too prone to be satisfied with mediocre performance. We are capable of doing so much better.

Brethren and sisters, we must get on our knees and plead with the Lord for help and strength and direction. We must then stand on our feet and move forward.

I am absolutely confident that heaven will smile upon us. The Lord will hear and answer our prayers if we will commit ourselves, giving our very best to this work.

I pray for you. I plead with heaven in your behalf. I thank you one and all for all you are doing and pray that you may have the strength to do more as we face the great, almost overwhelming challenge that comes with life in our time.

God bless you is my humble prayer as I express my love, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Note

1. Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 151.

Notes

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