

*I acted, And behold!*

*Duty was joy!*

(Quoted by Earl Nightingale, "Our Changing World," #5193.)

Work was instituted from the beginning as the means by which the children of God were to fulfill their earthly stewardship. Work is our divine heritage. Elder Stephen L Richards taught: "Work with faith is a cardinal point of our theological doctrine and our future state—our heaven, is envisioned in terms of eternal progression through constant labor." (In

Conference Report, Oct. 1939, pp. 65, 68.)

The voice of the Lord to this generation is:

"Behold, I say unto you that it is my will that you should go forth and not tarry, neither be idle but labor with your might. . . .

"And thus, if ye are faithful ye shall be laden with many sheaves, and crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life." (D&C 75:3, 5.)

To this I testify, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## Sister Barbara B. Smith

In Proverbs, King Lemuel speaks of what his mother taught him. She gave him such an impressive guide that it is recorded in great detail. She made a particular point of telling him about the qualities and attitudes to look for in a wife and in the mother of his children, if his household were to be so well managed that in the end the children would rise up and call their mother blessed. (See Prov. 31:28.)

### **No one way will fit all circumstances**

We need this kind of specific counsel in this day when so many avenues of interest are open to women, and when more and more opportunities are coming to us. We need to look very closely not only at the offerings, but also at our own family's needs if, finally, our children are to receive here in mortality the eternal blessings that a mother is so ably qualified to give.

Each mother will have to determine how she can bless her children. Because of the many options from which a woman might choose, it becomes extremely important that she select carefully.

To the woman with children at

home, that choice becomes not only important but critical. She will need unerring sources for direction—the scriptures, the teachings of Church leaders, and personal affirmation to her prayers of supplication—for the "changing winds," of which we are warned in Ephesians (4:14), are perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the challenges and decisions women are facing now.

We could be easily "tossed to and fro" (Eph. 4:14) if it were not for the "more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." (2 Pet. 1:19.)

In that light of truth each woman can walk with confidence, knowing what is right for her. There is no one way that will fit all circumstances. Some women must come to one solution and some to another.

### **Give help and encouragement**

The ideal for a family is, and always has been, to have a mother in the home to be with the children, to care for them and to help them grow, to coordinate and correlate the family's activities, and to be a stay against

intrusions of unrighteousness. There are times, however, under unusual circumstances, when, in order to help provide for even the basic needs of her family, a mother may be required to accept employment outside her home. As President Ezra Taft Benson has stated, "Many of you often find yourselves in circumstances that are not always ideal . . . who, because of necessity, must work and leave your children with others." (ENSIGN, Nov. 1981, p. 105.)

It is to those mothers we address these remarks today. We urge also that Relief Society leaders make certain that they include those mothers in Relief Society callings and that lessons and programs address their needs. We hope that husbands, home teachers, and visiting teachers will give them encouragement and positive reinforcement in the demanding role that is theirs, for we know that in spite of their added working role they still must provide the emotional support that children need. In addition to the obvious physical needs of children, there are other aspects of a child's life that should not be neglected even though a mother has employment outside the home.

### Challenges

The challenges facing the working mother of small children are many. First, she must find someone to give good care to her child. Next, she has to decide what to do in an emergency situation when there is an accident or sickness. She must rely on the help of an understanding employer, a relative, a neighbor, a schoolteacher, or someone else to help in those times of crisis.

We find that most working mothers organize their time by advance planning, shopping, scheduling, and assigning chores to include each member of the household. They realize the importance of having meals that provide essential nutrients and the

warmth of gracious family dining—even though fast-food establishments appeal to and even cater to the working-outside-the-home mother as an easier alternative.

We are well aware, however, that the real challenges for many working mothers come in their responsibility for guiding children through periods of questioning and decision making and in their times of trouble. These challenges come in being able to sense the unexpressed needs of children and those of which young people, in their immaturity, may not themselves be aware. A mother may not always be on hand when her child's needs seem most acute. But we find that many working mothers take every opportunity to be with their children—to work with them in accomplishing household duties; when it is appropriate, to shop, plan, and play together; and sometimes just to be in the same room so that they have the sense of being with someone who loves them.

### Balance between work and play

It might be a temptation for a working mother to plan special outings and play times as the so-called "quality" time she has with her children. But many are aware of the danger this poses in giving them a distorted picture of life by using all their time together in recreation. It is important for children to see the balance that is necessary between work and play. They need to know that special events are more meaningful when daily routines are established and when assigned duties are completed.

One grandmother helped her grandchildren learn this truth. When they came to her house she was careful to have jobs they could do together; then afterward, they played a game. Then another task was followed by another game. The children learned, as she hoped they would, the relationship between work and play and the comfortable sense of playing after work is completed.

Schoolwork, too, and practicing to develop musical or other talents can become part of the daily routine. A mother who strives to know success can help her children learn the *price* of success by working with them, when necessary, to help them reach a degree of excellence. A mother can make the difference in a child's achievement. She can give support by monitoring the completion and accuracy of assignments. She can help a child reap the rewards of persistent effort.

Even though a working mother cannot be the full-time model she might be if she were home with her children, she can help them learn the personal discipline that comes with daily, routine responsibilities, and, afterward, the well-being resulting from praise for work well done.

A mother must consider the essential purposes of life. Leo Rosten, writer, scientist, professor, has made a statement that gives us purposes to ponder:

"Where was it ever promised us that life on this earth can ever be easy, free from conflict and uncertainty, devoid of anguish and wonder and pain? . . .

"The purpose of life is to *matter*, to be productive, to have it make some difference that you lived at all. Happiness, in the ancient, noble sense, means self-fulfillment—and is given to those who use to the fullest whatever talents God . . . bestowed upon them."

He continues: "Happiness, to me, lies in stretching, to the farthest boundaries of which we are capable, the resources of the mind and heart." (*This Week Magazine*, 20 Jan. 1963, p. 2.)

### Nourish body and spirit

A woman who must work to care for the needs of her children should learn the essential purposes of life and come to know the Lord and feel his love and direction. Then she can help

her children know him and grow to feel secure in our Heavenly Father's love.

One woman who came to this realization wrote:

"Right after my divorce, I determined that I was going to give my children the *best* of everything. . . . I would provide well for them. . . . I would substitute in every way for their father. I would take them on picnics, build them a tree house, and play baseball with them. I would not allow them to suffer because of our divorce.

"I baked, sewed, ran, played, wrestled. I cleaned, I ironed. I was busy being both mother and father for them.

"One evening I put the three of them in the bathtub together while I finished a chore. Then I came back, soaped the youngest, rinsed him, lifted him from the tub, and stood him on a bath mat while I wrapped a towel around him. Then I carried him off to the bedroom to put his pajamas on and tuck him into bed. I repeated the process with his brother and then his sister.

"As I bent down to kiss them goodnight, my older son said, 'Sing us a song, please.'

"Which one?' I asked.

"'Rudolph'!' said the youngest immediately.

"No, 'Johnny Appleseed,'" said his brother.

"Then their sister said, 'Sing, 'Stay Awake.'"

"I can see if I stay to sing one song, I'll be singing for an hour, and I don't have an hour to spare. So goodnight.' I turned off the lights.

"Please sing just one song, mommy. You can choose the song.'

"What about our prayers?"

"Firmly, I replied, 'I said goodnight and I mean goodnight.'

"As I walked back to the bathroom to tidy up, I thought of how grateful they would be someday when they were old enough to understand how much I had done for them!

"As I entered the room I stopped short. There on the bath mat were three perfect sets of damp footprints. For one brief moment I thought I saw standing in the footprints the spirits of those precious children I had just tucked into bed. In that instant I saw the foolishness of my ways. I had been so busy providing for the physical needs of their mortal bodies that I was neglecting their spirits. I knew then that I had a sacred obligation to nourish both. If I were to clothe them in the latest fashions and give them all that money could buy and fail to tend to their spiritual needs, I could not justifiably account for my awesome responsibility as their mother.

"Humbled, I went back to their bedroom. We knelt together in prayer. We all four climbed up on the boys' big bed and sang song after song until I was the only one awake to sing."

### The single parent

Latter-day Saint mothers can find programs in Relief Society that will help them meet the many needs of their children—not only their health and safety, their food and clothing, their social and emotional needs, but their spiritual growth, and the establishment of good family relationships that will last beyond time.

Testimonies abound in support of those who have provided extraordinary care as single parents. We are confident that the Lord is particularly mindful of such women and that, while their role is an unusually challenging one, they can succeed. But they too must make their decisions in the light of the principles and purposes of the Lord, in that faith which is truly the substance of things hoped for.

With the help of the Lord, families will be given strength to do what they must do—working together, using every skill to organize and to be provident, in order that they might accomplish the goals they have set.

Young children respond readily to real need and can work together with their parent or parents to achieve family success.

### A model of righteousness

Of all the creations of God, men and women are the ones that are to become as he is. We are his children. He has given us a plan, a model, and teachings that will help us gain his attributes.

We can learn to become like him as we use his ways to teach our children: establishing regular communications with them; listening, guiding, prompting; watching over them always; protecting but not manipulating; allowing them to learn by experience; correcting them in such a way that they learn to obey—not because it is our will, but because they have learned to do what is right to do to grow in wisdom.

We can plan our lives and, to the degree that it is possible, determine the end from the beginning by building upon God-given principles to provide the security of truth.

We can strive to be a model of righteousness. Children learn what life is by observing and doing.

When a mother provides an example of joy, the children's world is one of happiness. When she makes wise choices, she helps them to learn discernment, and she brings to her home the refining quality that is such an important element in worthwhile progress. Learning from the Lord a Christlike love, she can manifest this kind of selfless care that will bless her home and at the same time show her children how to love. As we are told in the scriptures, "by laboring with all the might of [our] body and the faculty of [our] whole soul," we can have peace in our lives, and we can "teach [our] children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord." (W of M 1:18; D&C 68:28.)

### The end better than the beginning

Mothers have the special opportunity of bringing children into the world; they can also play a significant role in bringing to pass their success and happiness here as they prepare them for life eternal.

The economic conditions of today present problems to women and their families that have many implications and far-reaching effects. A woman can find solutions as she recognizes the needs that only she can fill and the part that she must play in the Christlike development of her children. As she lives close to the Spirit, that way will be made clear for her. A wife may be compelled to help with the finances of her family. In this matter we have been given direction. President Kimball has stated:

“Some women, because of circumstances beyond their control, must work. We understand that. . . . Do not, however, make the mistake of being drawn off into secondary tasks which will cause the neglect of your eternal assignments such as . . . rearing the spirit children of our Father in Heaven. Pray carefully over all your decisions.” (ENSIGN, Nov. 1979, p. 103.)

In “A Little Parable for Mothers” by Temple Bailey, a young mother setting out on her path of life

was told that the way would not be easy but that the end would be better than the beginning. She taught her children that life was good. She gave them courage, fortitude, and strength. And finally she was able to teach them to look above the clouds that bring shadows of darkness into this life, to see the glory of God. Knowing how to find their Heavenly Father through the darkness and living by the light of his glory, her children could walk alone. The mother’s journey was over, but the end was better than the beginning because of what she was able to teach her children. (Typescript, LDS Church Historical Dept., Salt Lake City, Utah.)

In the end it is you wonderful, wonderful mothers—you who have put your families first, who have helped each child come to feel the acceptance of your love and the love of our Father in Heaven, and to know the truth of the gospel as your life bears witness of it—it is you whose children will “arise up, and call [you] blessed.” (Prov. 31:28.) I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Romney

Elder J. Thomas Fyans, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us.

## Elder J. Thomas Fyans

With the headlines of newspapers and cover stories of magazines full of doom and gloom about the economy, it is well for us to recall the counsel which we as a church have heard for years. That counsel has included such things as obtaining a year’s supply of food, staying out of debt, and preparing for employment. Following this counsel has meant financial salvation to many who have found themselves unemployed during the past year.

### Stand independent

The Lord has commanded us to remain self-sufficient, thus retaining our independence. He has said:

“Behold, this is the preparation wherewith I prepare you, and the foundation, and the ensample which I give unto you, whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given you;

“That through my providence,