

Coordination and Cooperation

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It's a marvelous thing to see this tabernacle filled with sisters and then to realize that tens of thousands of others are met in centers throughout the country to participate in this most notable meeting. We realize also that through the recordings of this meeting, eventually most of the sisters throughout the world will have an opportunity to share in the proceedings of this special conference for the sisters of the Church.

We greet you, we commend you for your attendance, and we honor you for being what you are.

This evening I would like to comment briefly on two matters that relate closely to the theme of this meeting, and to the fact that you are here tonight, not as members of Primary and Young Women and Relief Society, but as members of a great sisterhood who have many interests, needs, and traits in common.

I think it may be well for you to know that in the last months and weeks, the general presidencies and boards of Relief Society and Young Women and Primary have taken some historic steps to draw closer together. They have determined that they will coordinate and cooperate more closely than ever before in planning activities and in preparing programs and materials that will bless your lives. In a very short time, these three presidencies will have their offices located in the same building here in Salt Lake City. This will make it easier for them to communicate with one another and to share many of their resources. They will also be able to represent more effectively than ever before the interests of the sisters of the Church and coordinate their organizational concerns, which of course all of them have.

Now, these developments do not imply in any way that there has been a consolidation or an amalgamation of these three organizations. That is not the case. And there will be no differences in the operation of these organizations in the field. But obviously it is the wish of these general officers that the closeness, harmony, and unity which are manifest in the efforts they are making here at Church headquarters will reflect to those of you who serve and work together on the ward and stake levels.

One other matter closely related to the first has to do with the fact that at the present time, under the consolidated meeting schedule, the Sunday classwork of Relief Society and Primary and Young Women occur at the same time. This requires that many of the adult sisters who serve in callings in Primary and Young Women are not able to participate regularly in the Sunday class meetings of Relief Society. We hope that those of you sisters who are called to serve for a time in the Primary and Young Women will continue to feel a sense of the sisterhood that I hope you feel in this meeting tonight. I hope you will recognize that in giving service in those organizations, you are having not only great opportunities to bless and enrich the lives of others, but also unique opportunities to develop and grow yourselves.

I know the parallel is not a perfect one, but perhaps it would be appropriate to acknowledge that for most of my adult life I have had assignments in the wards and stakes where I have lived that have precluded my meeting with my priesthood quorums on a regular basis on Sundays. However, I have never felt that this service, which kept me away from those meetings, separated me from the fellowship of my quorums. In every way that was possible I have continued to participate in the service projects, the social activities, and the home teaching

assignments.

I hope you sisters who are called to serve temporarily outside of Relief Society will recognize that you have great opportunities during this time. I have never felt that my service outside my quorum has diminished in any way my opportunity for spiritual growth or for opportunities to serve and hopefully that service has provided some blessings and help for others. So we ask you to cooperate and work closely together, in the wards and stakes, in a spirit of common sisterhood, with an eye single to the glory of God and to the development of the talents and abilities that all of you have and that qualify you for ultimate service in the kingdom of God in the eternities to come.

Now, finally, I'd like to pay a special tribute to all of you sisters for being who you are, in recognition of the unique contributions that you bring to the quality of life that we all enjoy and to which we aspire. The longer I live and the more I observe, the more convinced I become that there are some basic differences in the very natures of men and women. I'm convinced that you carry with you, by virtue of these unique differences, some qualities and some traits that allow you to make contributions that are uniquely your own. I don't know of a better way to illustrate this than to share with you quickly a recent experience.

Sister Larsen and I were assigned earlier this year to visit two stakes in Europe. The conferences were on successive weekends. Midweek one of our daughters and her husband, who were in Europe on business of their own at that time, arranged their schedules so that they could join us for a day in one of the beautiful cities of Europe. During the course of the day, we visited a lovely shopping center that featured the beautiful porcelain ware for which that city is well known. The work is exquisitely beautiful and very expensive.

As my daughter and I were standing side by side admiring some of the porcelain figurines that were placed on the shelves of this store, an older lady stepped up to our side, apparently attracted by one of the beautiful figurines on a shelf above us. Wanting to inspect it more closely, she reached up and took it in her hands to bring it down closer to her. It slipped from her fingers to the marble floor and broke into many pieces.

The sound of breaking attracted the attention of everyone in the shop. Instinctively, I stepped away. Just as instinctively, my daughter did the opposite thing. She quickly stepped to the side of this elderly lady, put her arm around her, whispered some consoling words in her ear, and then stooped to begin to pick up the pieces of the porcelain object. I felt a little chagrined for myself, but a deep sense of pride and love for my daughter. In my mind and by commitment, I knew what I should have done, but instinctively, I did not. By instinct, she did what the Savior would have done.

I can think of no better illustration to reflect the marvelous qualities that you as sisters, as daughters of God, bring to bear, not only in making our own lives better, but in contributing, in a most essential way, to the successful operation of the plan of life and salvation that God has provided for all of his children. I honor you and express my deep love and appreciation to all of you for these wonderful gifts you have. May you be blessed to enlarge them, to expand them, and to use them, striving together in effective ways to bless all of God's children and to assist in the great onward movement of his work in this vital time in which we all live, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



