

# Young Women in the Work

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Every young woman in the Church should feel valued, have opportunities to serve, and feel that she has something of worth to contribute to this work.

A year ago, in the general priesthood session of conference, Bishop Gérald Caussé spoke to the men of the Church describing how Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood holders are inseparable partners in accomplishing the work of salvation.<sup>1</sup> That message has been a great blessing in helping the young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood see the part they play in building the kingdom of God on this earth. Their joint service strengthens the Church and brings about deeper conversion and commitment in the hearts of our young men as they see the value of their contribution and how magnificent this work is.

Today I would like for my remarks to be a bookend to that message as I talk about the young women of the Church, who are equally needed and essential in accomplishing the work of the Lord in their families and in His Church.

Like Bishop Caussé, I lived in a small branch of the Church during a good part of my teen years, and I was often asked to fulfill assignments and callings that would normally have been done by adults. For example, those of us in the youth program often took the lead in helping organize and run our activities and special events. We wrote plays, formed a singing group to entertain at branch activities, and were full participants in every meeting. I was called to be the branch music leader and led the singing in sacrament meeting each week. It was a great experience as a 16-year-old to stand in front of everyone in the branch each Sunday and lead them in singing the hymns. I felt needed and knew I had something to contribute. People depended on me to be there, and I loved feeling useful. That experience helped build my testimony of Jesus Christ, and just as it did for Bishop Caussé, it anchored my life in gospel service.

Each member should know how much he or she is needed. Each person has something important to contribute and has unique talents and abilities that help move this important work along. Our young men have Aaronic Priesthood duties described in the Doctrine and Covenants that are rather visible. It may be less obvious to the young women of the Church, their parents, and their leaders that, from the time they are baptized, young women have covenant responsibilities “to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [they] may be in, even until death.”<sup>2</sup> Young women have opportunities to fulfill these responsibilities in their wards and branches and when they serve in class presidencies, on youth councils, and in other callings. Every young woman in the Church should feel valued, have opportunities to serve, and feel that she has something of worth to contribute to this work.

In *Handbook 2*, we learn that the work of salvation within our wards includes “member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel.”<sup>3</sup> This work is directed by our faithful bishops, who hold priesthood keys for their ward. For many years now, our presidency has been asking the question “Which of these areas mentioned should our young women *not* be involved in?” The answer is that they have something to contribute in *all* areas of this work.

For example, I recently met several young women in the Las Vegas area who have been called to serve as ward temple and family history consultants. They were glowing with enthusiasm about being able to teach and help members of their ward find their ancestors. They had valuable skills on the computer, had learned how to use FamilySearch, and were excited to share that knowledge with others. It was clear that they had testimonies and an understanding of the importance of seeking out the names of our deceased ancestors so that essential saving ordinances can be performed for them in the temple.

Several months ago, I had the opportunity to test an idea with two 14-year-old young women. I obtained copies of two actual ward council agendas and gave Emma and Maggie each a copy. I asked them to read over the agendas and see if there were any action items from the ward councils in which they might be able to be of service. Emma saw that a new family was moving into the ward, and she said she could help them move in and unpack. She thought she could befriend the children in the family and show them around their new school. She saw there was a ward dinner coming up and felt there were many different ways she could offer her services.

Maggie saw that there were several elderly people in the ward who needed visits and fellowshiping. She said she would love to visit with and be of help to these wonderful older members. She also felt she could help teach members of the ward how to set up and use social media accounts. There really wasn’t one thing on those agendas with which those two young women *could not* help!

Do those who sit on ward councils, or hold any calling in the ward, see the young women as valuable resources to help fill the many needs within our wards? There is usually a long list of situations that require someone to serve, and we often think only of the adults in the ward to meet those needs. Just as our Atonic Priesthood holders have been invited to labor with their fathers and other men of the Melchizedek Priesthood, our young women can be called upon to provide service and minister to the needs of ward members with their mothers or other exemplary sisters. They are capable, eager, and willing to do so much more than merely attend church on Sundays!

As we consider the roles that our young women will be expected to assume in the near future, we might ask ourselves what kind of experiences we could provide for them now that will help with their preparation to be missionaries, gospel scholars, leaders in the Church auxiliaries, temple workers, wives, mothers, mentors, examples, and friends. They can actually begin now to fill many of those roles. Youth are often asked to help teach lessons on Sunday in their classes. Opportunities are now available for our young women to perform service in the temple previously completed by ordinance workers or volunteers when they attend with their youth groups to perform baptisms for the dead. Our Primary-age girls are now invited to attend Temple and Priesthood Preparation meetings, which will help them understand that they too are important participants in priesthood-directed work. They are learning that men, women,

youth, and children are all recipients of priesthood blessings and all can take an active role in moving forward the Lord's work.

Bishops, we know your duties are often heavy, but just as one of your highest priorities is to preside over the Aaronic Priesthood quorums, *Handbook 2* explains that “the bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Young Women organization. They watch over and strengthen individual young women, working closely with parents and Young Women leaders in this effort.” It also states that “the bishop and his counselors regularly participate in Young Women meetings, service, and activities.”<sup>4</sup> We are grateful for bishops who take the time to visit Young Women classes and who provide opportunities for young women to be more than mere spectators of the work. Thank you for making sure your young women are valued participants in meeting the needs of ward members! These opportunities to serve in meaningful ways bless them much more than activities in which they are just entertained.

To you, the young women of the Church, your teenage years can be busy and often challenging. We have noticed that many more of you are struggling with issues of self-worth, anxiety, high levels of stress, and perhaps even depression. Turning your thoughts outward, instead of dwelling on your own problems, may not resolve all of these issues, but service can often lighten your burdens and make your challenges seem less hard. One of the best ways to increase feelings of self-worth is to show, through our concern and service to others, that we have much of worth to contribute.<sup>5</sup> I encourage you young women to raise your hands to volunteer and to put those hands to work when you see needs around you. As you fulfill your covenant responsibilities and participate in building the kingdom of God, blessings will flow into your life and you'll discover the deep and lasting joy of discipleship.

Brothers and sisters, our young women are amazing. They have talents, unlimited enthusiasm, and energy, and they are compassionate and caring. They *want* to be of service. They need to know they are valued and essential in the work of salvation. Just as young men prepare in the Aaronic Priesthood for greater service as they advance into the Melchizedek Priesthood, our young women are preparing to become members of the greatest women's organization on the earth—the Relief Society. Together, these beautiful, strong, faithful young women and young men are preparing to be wives and husbands, and mothers and fathers who will raise families worthy of the celestial kingdom of God.

I testify that the work of our Heavenly Father is to bring about the immortality and eternal life of His children.<sup>6</sup> Our precious young women have an important role to play in helping to accomplish this great work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.