

Women and Gospel Learning in the Home

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The Savior is your perfect example of how you will play a major part in His move to place greater emphasis on gospel learning in the home.

My beloved sisters, it is wonderful to meet with you. This is an exciting time in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord is pouring out knowledge on His Church as He promised that He would.

You remember what He said: “How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.”¹

Part of the Lord’s current sharing of knowledge relates to accelerating His pouring out eternal truth on the heads and into the hearts of His people. He has made clear that the daughters of Heavenly Father will play a primary role in that miraculous acceleration. One evidence of the miracle is His leading His living prophet to put far greater emphasis on gospel instruction in the home and within the family.

You might ask, “How does that make faithful sisters a primary force to help the Lord pour out knowledge on His Saints?” The Lord gives the answer in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” You remember the words, but you may see new meaning and recognize that the Lord foresaw these exciting changes, which are now occurring. In the proclamation, He gave sisters charge to be the principal gospel educators in the family in these words: “Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.”² This includes the nurture of gospel truth and knowledge.

The proclamation goes on: “Fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”³ They are equal partners, equal in their potential for spiritual growth and for acquiring knowledge, and so are unified by helping each other. They are equal in their divine destiny to be exalted together. In fact, men and women cannot be exalted alone.

Why, then, does a daughter of God in a united and equal relationship receive the primary responsibility to nourish with the most important nutrient all must receive, a knowledge of truth coming from heaven? As nearly as I can see, that has been the Lord’s way since families were created in this world.

For instance, it was Eve who received the knowledge that Adam needed to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge for them to keep all of God’s commandments and to form a family. I do not know why it came to Eve first, but Adam and Eve were perfectly united when the knowledge was poured out on Adam.

Another example of the Lord's using the nurturing gifts of women is the way He strengthened the sons of Helaman. I get a lump in my throat when I read the account and remember my own mother's quiet words of assurance as I left home for military service.

Helaman recorded:

"They had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

"And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it."⁴

While I do not know all the Lord's reasons for giving primary responsibility for nurturing in the family to faithful sisters, I believe it has to do with your capacity to love. It takes great love to feel the needs of someone else more than your own. That is the pure love of Christ for the person you nurture. That feeling of charity comes from the person chosen to be the nurturer having qualified for the effects of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The motto of the Relief Society, which my own mother exemplified, seems to me inspired: "Charity Never Faileth."

As daughters of God, you have an innate and great capacity to sense the needs of others and to love. That, in turn, makes you more susceptible to the whisperings of the Spirit. The Spirit can then guide what you think, what you say, and what you do to nurture people so the Lord may pour knowledge, truth, and courage upon them.

You sisters hearing my voice are each in a unique place in your journey through life. Some are young girls in a general women's session for the first time. Some are young women preparing to be the nurturers God would have them be. Some are newly married who have not yet had children; others are young mothers with one or more. Some are mothers of teenagers and others with children in the mission field. Some have children who have become weakened in faith and are far from home. Some live alone with no faithful companion. Some are grandmothers.

Yet, whatever your personal circumstance, you are part—a key part—of the family of God and of your own family, whether in the future, in this world, or in the spirit world. Your trust from God is to nurture as many of His and your family members as you can with your love and your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your practical challenge is to know whom to nurture, how, and when. You need the Lord's help. He knows others' hearts, and He knows when they are ready to accept your nurturing. Your prayer of faith will be your key to success. You can depend upon receiving His guidance.

He gave this encouragement: "Ask the Father in my name in faith, believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient."⁵

In addition to prayer, serious study of the scriptures will be part of your growing power to nurture. Here is the promise: "Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man."⁶

So you will take more time to pray, to ponder, and to meditate on spiritual matters. You will have knowledge of truth poured out upon you and grow in your power to nurture others in your family.

There will be times when you feel that your progress in learning how better to nurture is slow. It will take faith to endure. The Savior sent you this encouragement:

“Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

“Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.”⁷

Your presence tonight is evidence that you are willing to accept the Lord’s invitation to nurture others. That is true even for the youngest here tonight. You can know whom to nurture in your family. If you pray with real intent, a name or a face will come to your mind. If you pray to know what to do or what to say, you will feel an answer. Each time you obey, your power to nurture will grow. You will be preparing for the day when you will nurture your own children.

Mothers of teenagers could pray to know how to nurture a son or daughter who seems unresponsive to nurturing. You might pray to know who could have the spiritual influence your child needs and would accept. God hears and answers such heartfelt prayers of worried mothers, and He sends help.

Also, a grandmother here tonight may feel heartache caused by the strains and difficulties of her children and grandchildren. You might take courage and direction from the experiences of families in the scriptures.

From the time of Eve and Adam, through Father Israel, and on to every family in the Book of Mormon, there is one sure lesson about what to do about the sorrows of unresponsive children: never stop loving.

We have the encouraging example of the Savior as He nourished the rebellious spirit children of His Heavenly Father. Even when they and we cause pain, the Savior’s hand is still outstretched.⁸ He spoke in 3 Nephi of His spiritual sisters and brothers whom He had tried unsuccessfully to nurture: “O ye people ... who are of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you.”⁹

For sisters in every stage of life’s journey, in every family situation, and across every culture, the Savior is your perfect example of how you will play a major part in His move to place greater emphasis on gospel learning in the home and family.

You will bring your inherent feeling of charity into changes in activities and practices in your family. That will bring greater spiritual growth. When you pray with and for family members, you will feel your and the Savior’s love for them. That will become more and more your spiritual gift as you seek it. Your family members will feel it as you pray with greater faith.

When the family gathers to read scriptures aloud, you will already have read them and prayed over them to prepare yourself. You will have found moments to pray for the Spirit to enlighten your mind. Then, when it is your turn to read, family members will feel your love for God and for His word. They will be nurtured by Him and by His Spirit.

The same outpouring can come in any family gathering if you pray and plan for it. It may take effort and time, but it will bring miracles. I remember a lesson my mother taught when I was little. I can still see in my mind the colored map she had made of the travels of the Apostle Paul.

I wonder how she found the time and energy to do that. And to this day I am blessed by her love for that faithful Apostle.

You will each find ways to contribute to the outpouring of truth upon your families in the Lord's restored Church. Each of you will pray, study, and ponder to know what your unique contribution will be. But this I know: each of you, equally yoked with sons of God, will be a major part of a miracle of gospel learning and living that will hasten the gathering of Israel and will prepare God's family for the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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