

# An Especially Noble Calling

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I'm grateful to focus my remarks today on women's continuing roles in the Restoration. It is clear that throughout history women have held a distinctive place in our Heavenly Father's plan. President Russell M. Nelson taught, "It would be impossible to measure the influence that ... women have, not only on families but also on the Lord's Church, as wives, mothers, and grandmothers; as sisters and aunts; as teachers and leaders; and especially as exemplars and devout defenders of the faith."<sup>1</sup>

In the early Relief Society in Nauvoo, 178 years ago, the Prophet Joseph Smith counseled the sisters to "live up to [their] privilege."<sup>2</sup> Their example teaches us today. They unitedly followed a prophet's voice and lived with steadfast faith in Jesus Christ as they helped lay the foundation we now stand upon. Sisters, it is our turn. We have a divine errand from the Lord, and our faithful, unique contributions are vital.

President Spencer W. Kimball explained: "To be a righteous woman during the winding up scenes on this earth, before the second coming of our Savior, is an especially noble calling. The righteous woman's strength and influence today can be tenfold what it might be in more tranquil times."<sup>3</sup>

President Nelson has likewise implored: "I plead with my sisters of [the] Church ... to step forward! Take your rightful and needful place in your home, in your community, and in the kingdom of God—more than you ever have before."<sup>4</sup>

Recently, I was privileged, along with a group of Primary children, to meet with President Russell M. Nelson in the replica of the Smith family home in Palmyra, New York. Listen as our beloved prophet teaches the children what *they* can do to step forward.

**Sister Jones:** "I'm curious to know if you might have a question that you would like to ask President Nelson. You're sitting here with the prophet. Is there anything that you've always wanted to ask a prophet? Yes, Pearl."

**Pearl:** "Is it hard to be a prophet? Are you, like, really busy?"

**President Nelson:** "Of course it's hard. Everything to do with becoming more like the Savior is difficult. For example, when God wanted to give the Ten Commandments to Moses, where did He tell Moses to go? Up on top of a mountain, on the top of Mount Sinai. So Moses had to walk all the way up to the

top of that mountain to get the Ten Commandments. Now, Heavenly Father could have said, ‘Moses, you start there, and I’ll start here, and I’ll meet you halfway.’ No, the Lord loves effort, because effort brings rewards that can’t come without it. For example, did you ever take piano lessons?”

**Children:** “Yes.”

**Pearl:** “I take violin.”

**President Nelson:** “And do you practice?”

**Children:** “Yes.”

**President Nelson:** “What happens if you don’t practice?”

**Pearl:** “You forget.”

**President Nelson:** “Yes, you don’t progress, do you? So the answer is yes, Pearl. It takes effort, a lot of hard work, a lot of study, and there’s never an end. That’s good! That’s good, because we’re always progressing. Even in the next life we’re making progress.”

President Nelson’s response to these precious children extends to each one of us. The Lord loves effort, and effort brings rewards. We keep practicing. We are always progressing as long as we are striving to follow the Lord.<sup>5</sup> He doesn’t expect perfection today. We keep climbing our personal Mount Sinai. As in times past, our journey does indeed take effort, hard work, and study, but our commitment to progress brings eternal rewards.<sup>6</sup>

What more do we learn from the Prophet Joseph Smith and the First Vision about effort, hard work, and study? The First Vision gives us direction in *our* unique, continuing roles. As women of faith, we can draw principles of truth from the Prophet Joseph’s experiences that provide insights for receiving our own revelation. For example:

- We labor under difficulties.
- We turn to the scriptures to receive wisdom to act.
- We demonstrate our faith and trust in God.
- We exert our power to plead with God to help us thwart the adversary’s influence.
- We offer up the desires of our hearts to God.
- We focus on His light guiding our life choices and resting upon us when we turn to Him.
- We realize He knows each of us by name and has individual roles for us to fulfill.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, Joseph Smith restored the knowledge that we have divine potential and eternal worth. Because of that relationship with our Heavenly Father, I believe

He *expects* us to receive revelation from Him.

The Lord instructed Emma Smith to “receive the Holy Ghost,” learn much, “lay aside the things of this world, ... seek for the things of a better,” and “cleave unto [her] covenants” with God.<sup>8</sup> Learning is integral to progression, especially as the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost teaches us what is needful for each of us to lay aside—meaning that which could *distract* us or *delay* our progression.

President Nelson said, “I plead with you to increase your spiritual capacity to receive revelation.”<sup>9</sup> Our prophet’s words are continually with me as I contemplate women’s ability to step forward. He pleads with us, which indicates priority. He is teaching us how to survive spiritually in a sin-sick world by receiving and acting on revelation.<sup>10</sup> As we do so, honoring and living the Lord’s commandments, we are promised, even as Emma Smith was, “a crown of righteousness.”<sup>11</sup> The Prophet Joseph taught of the importance of *knowing* that the path we are pursuing in this lifetime is approved of God. Without that knowledge, we “will grow weary in [our] minds, and faint.”<sup>12</sup>

In this conference, we will hear truths that inspire us to change, improve, and purify our lives. Through personal revelation, we can prevent what some call “general conference overwhelm”—when we leave so determined to do it *all* now. Women wear many hats, but it is impossible, and unnecessary, to wear them all at once. The Spirit helps us determine which work to focus on today.<sup>13</sup>

The Lord’s loving influence through the Holy Ghost helps us know *His* priority for our progression. Heeding personal revelation leads to *personal* progression.<sup>14</sup> We listen and act.<sup>15</sup> The Lord said, “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.”<sup>16</sup> Our continuing role is to receive continuing revelation.

As we attain a greater degree of proficiency at doing so, we can receive more power in our individual roles to minister and accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation—to truly “lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better.”<sup>17</sup> We can then more effectively inspire our rising generation to do the same.

Brothers and sisters, we all seek God’s power in our lives.<sup>18</sup> There is beautiful unity between women and men in accomplishing God’s work today. We access the power of the priesthood through covenants, made first in the waters of baptism and then within the walls of holy temples.<sup>19</sup> President Nelson taught us, “Every woman and every man who makes covenants with God and keeps those covenants, and who participates worthily in priesthood ordinances, has direct access to the power of God.”<sup>20</sup>

My personal admission today is that as a woman I didn’t realize, earlier in my life, that *I* had access, through my covenants, to the power of the priesthood.<sup>21</sup> Sisters, I pray that we will recognize and cherish priesthood power as we “cleave unto [our] covenants,”<sup>22</sup> embrace the truths of the scriptures, and heed the words of our living prophets.

Let us boldly declare our devotion to our Heavenly Father and our Savior, “with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.”<sup>23</sup> Let us joyfully continue this journey toward our highest spiritual potential and help those around us to do the same through love, service, leadership, and compassion.

Elder James E. Talmage tenderly reminded us, “The world’s greatest champion of woman and womanhood is Jesus the Christ.”<sup>24</sup> In the final analysis of women’s continuing roles in the Restoration, and for us all, what role is preeminent? I testify that it is to *hear* Him,<sup>25</sup> to *follow* Him,<sup>26</sup> to *trust* Him,<sup>27</sup> and to become an extension of His love.<sup>28</sup> I know He lives.<sup>29</sup> In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.