The Divine Role of Women

Introduction

1. Robert D. Hales

Because of the importance of the family to the eternal plan of happiness, Satan makes a major effort to destroy the sanctity of the family, demean the importance of the role of men and women, encourage moral uncleanliness and violations of the sacred law of chastity, and to discourage parents from placing the bearing and rearing of children as one of their highest priorities. ["The Eternal Family," in Ensign (Nov. 1996), p. 65; emphasis added]

2. Neal A. Maxwell

Events and circumstances in the last days make it imperative for us as members of the Church to become more grounded, rooted, established, and settled (see Col. 1:23; Col. 2:7; 2 Pet. 1:12). Jesus said to His disciples, "settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you" (JST Luke 14:28). If not so settled, the turbulence will be severe. If settled, we will not be "tossed to and fro," whether by rumors, false doctrines, or by the behavioral and intellectual fashions of the world. Nor will we get caught up in the "talk show" mentality, spending our time like ancient Athenians "in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). Why be concerned with the passing preferences of the world anyway? "For the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:31).

The poet-prophet Jacob witnessed among Church members how covenant-breaking wounded "delicate minds" and how hearts were "pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:9, 35). He was "weighed down" and so heavy with sorrow because some members esteemed their covenants so lightly (Jacob 2:3). As I witness some of today's walking wounded, I understand Jacob's feelings as never before.

Some give of their time yet withhold themselves, being present without giving of their presence and going through the superficial motions of membership instead of the deep emotions of consecrated discipleship.

Some try to get by with knowing only the headlines of the gospel . . . ("Overcome . . . Even As I Also Overcame" Ensign, May 1987, pp. 70; emphasis added)

3. Spencer W. Kimball

Finally, my dear sisters, may I suggest to you something that has not been said before or at least in quite this way. Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world
(in whom there is often such an inner sense of spirituality) will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world.

Among the real heroines in the world who will come into the Church are women who are more concerned with being righteous than with being selfish. These real heroines have true humility, which places a higher value on integrity than on visibility. Remember, it is as wrong to do things just to be seen of women as it is to do things to be seen of men. Great women and men are always more anxious to serve than to have dominion.

Thus it will be that female exemplars of the Church will be a significant force in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the Church in the last days.

No wonder the adversary strives, even now, to prevent this from happening! Regardless of who is getting the adversary's special attention at any given time, he seeks to make all people "miserable like unto himself" (2 Ne. 2:27). Indeed, he seeks "the misery of all mankind" (2 Ne. 2:18). He is undeviating in his purposes and is clever and relentless in his pursuit of them. ("The Role of Righteous Women," *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 103-4)

We Must Seek to Understand
The Divine Role of Women

Spencer W. Kimball

There is no greater and more glorious set of promises given to women than those which come through the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ. Where else can you learn who you really are? Where else can you be given the necessary explanations and assurances about the nature of life? From what other source can you learn about your own uniqueness and identity? From whom else could you learn of our Father in Heaven's glorious plan of happiness?

The gospel answers are the only true answers to the questions which women and men, over the centuries, have raised about themselves, about life, and about the universe. How good God has been to us all in blessing us with these answers and assurances—even though these truths place upon us serious and everlasting obligations.
How special it is for Latter-day Saint women to be given the lofty assignments they have been given by our Father in Heaven, especially those of you who have been privileged to be born in this part of this last dispensation. Let other women pursue heedlessly what they perceive as their selfish interests. You can be a much needed force for love and truth and righteousness on this planet. Let others selfishly pursue false values, but God has given to you the tremendous tasks of nurturing families, friends, and neighbors, just as men are to provide. But both husband and wife are to be parents! ("The Role of Righteous Women," Ensign, Nov. 1979, p. 103)

Premortality - Divine Potential

1. Lorenzo Snow

Our spirit birth gave us godlike capabilities. We were born in the image of God our Father; He begot us like unto Himself. There is the nature of deity in the composition of our spiritual organization; in our spiritual birth our Father transmitted to us the capabilities, powers and faculties which He Himself possessed -- as much so as the child on its mother’s bosom possesses, although in an undeveloped state, the faculties, powers, and susceptibilities of its parent.

[Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, p.4]

2. First Presidency Message: Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund

Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.

[Messages of the First Presidency, 4:206]

3. The Family: A Proclamation to the World

All human beings -- male and female -- are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal and eternal identity and purpose.

4. Spencer W. Kimball

The Primary song says, "I am a child of God." Born with a noble birthright. God is your father. He loves you. He and your mother in heaven value you beyond any measure. They gave your eternal intelligence spirit form, just as your earthly mother and father have given you a mortal body. You are unique. One of a kind, made of the eternal intelligence which gives you claim upon eternal life. Let there be no question in your mind about your value as an individual. The whole intent of the gospel plan is to provide an opportunity for each of you to reach your fullest potential, which is eternal progression and the possibility of godhood.

("Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters," Ensign, Nov. 1978, p. 105; emphasis added)
Equal With God - The Ultimate Goal

1. D&C 76:92-95

And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things--where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever.

They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace;

And he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion. (emphasis added)

2. D&C 88:107

And then shall the angels be crowned with the glory of his might, and the saints shall be filled with his glory, and receive their inheritance and be made equal with him. (emphasis added).

The Divine Role as Help-Meet

Woman as the Ezer Kenigdo of Man

Moses 3:18-24

18 And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten, that it was not good that the man should be alone; wherefore, I will make an help meet for him [Ezer Kenigdo].

19 And out of the ground I, the Lord God, formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and commanded that they should come unto Adam, to see what he would call them; and they were also living souls; for I, God, breathed into
them the breath of life, and commanded that whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that should be the name thereof.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but as for Adam, there was not found an help meet for him.

21 And I, the Lord God, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he slept, and I took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof;

22 And the rib which I, the Lord God, had taken from man, made I a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said: This I know now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

**Harold B. Lee**

Marriage is a partnership. Someone has observed that in the Bible account of the creation woman was not formed from a part of man's head, suggesting that she might rule over him, nor from a part of a man's foot that she was to be trampled under his feet. Woman was taken from man's side as though to emphasize the fact that she was always to be by his side as a partner and companion. At the marriage altar you are pledged to each other from that day to pull the load together in double harness. (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee*, p.109)

**Boyd K. Packer**

While fathers and sons bear the burden of the priesthood, it was declared in the very beginning that it was not good for man to be alone. A companion, or "helpmeet," was given him. The word meet means equal. Man and woman, together, were not to be alone. Together they constituted a fountain of life. While neither can generate life without the other, the mystery of life unfolds when these two become one. ("A Tribute to Women," *Ensign*, July 1989, pp. 72-75)

**The Family: A Proclamation to the World**

In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.

**The Divine Role of Motherhood**
The Roles of Man and Woman

Moses 4:22-25
Unto the woman, I, the Lord God, said: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception.

The Role of Woman
[1] In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,

[2] and thy desire shall be to thy husband,

The Role of Man
[1] and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam, I, the Lord God, said: Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the fruit of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying--Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed shall be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.

[2] By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou shalt return unto the ground--for thou shalt surely die--for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou wast, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Spencer W. Kimball
Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to. You are accountable for those things which long ago were expected of you just as are those we sustain as prophets and apostles! ("The Role of Righteous Women," Ensign, Nov. 1979, p. 102)

Brigham Young
The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming Gods like himself; when we have been proved in our present capacity, and have been faithful with all things he puts into our possession. [Discourses of Brigham Young, p.57]

In Sorrow Thou Shalt Bring Forth Children?
The work of a mother is a type of the saving work of Jesus Christ!
Isaiah 53
1 WHO hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.
3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with
grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we
esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem
him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities:
the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is
brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is dumb,
so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his
generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of
my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death;
because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou
shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his
days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his
knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their
iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the
spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he
was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made
intercession for the transgressors.

Abindai's Interpretation of Isaiah 53:10
Mosiah 15
10 And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say
unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his
seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

11 Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets,
yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the
Lord--I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

12 For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?

13 Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed.

Parenthood
First Presidency Message (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay)

In the October, 1942 General Conference, J. Reuben Clark, Jr. read a message from the First Presidency to the general Church membership. Under the title of PARENTHOOD, the following was said [The numbering is NOT original]:

[1] Amongst His earliest commands to Adam and Eve, the Lord said: "Multiply and replenish the earth." He has repeated that command in our day. He has again revealed in this, the last dispensation, the principle of the eternity of the marriage covenant. He has restored to earth the authority for entering into that covenant, and has declared that it is the only due and proper way of joining husband and wife, and the only means by which the sacred family relationship may be carried beyond the grave and through eternity. He has declared that this eternal relationship may be created only by the ordinances which are administered in the holy temples of the Lord, and therefore that His people should marry only in His temple in accordance with such ordinances.

[2] The Lord has told us that it is the duty of every husband and wife to obey the command given to Adam to multiply and replenish the earth, so that the legions of choice spirits waiting for their tabernacles of flesh may come here and move forward under God's great design to become perfect souls, for without these fleshly tabernacles they cannot progress to their God-planned destiny. Thus, every husband and wife should become a father and mother in Israel to children born under the holy, eternal covenant.

[3] By bringing these choice spirits to earth, each father and each mother assume towards the tabernacled spirit and towards the Lord Himself by having taken advantage of the opportunity He offered, an obligation of the most sacred kind, because the fate of that spirit in the eternities to come, the blessings or punishments which shall await it in the hereafter, depend, in great part, upon the care, the teachings, the training which the parents shall give to that spirit.
[4] No parent can escape that obligation and that responsibility, and for the proper meeting thereof, the Lord will hold us to a strict accountability. No loftier duty than this can be assumed by mortals.

[5] Motherhood thus becomes a holy calling, a sacred dedication for carrying out the Lord's plans, a consecration of devotion to the uprearing and fostering, the nurturing in body, mind, and spirit, of those who kept their first estate and who come to this earth for their second estate "to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them." (Abraham 3:25) To lead them to keep their second estate is the work of motherhood and "they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever." (op. cit.)

[6] This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public nurseries cannot do it; hired help cannot do it--only mother, aided as much as may be by the loving hands of father, brothers, and sisters, can give the full needed measure of watchful care. The mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, or for civic service, should remember that "a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Prop. 29: 15) In our day the Lord has said that unless parents teach their children the doctrines of the Church "the sin be upon the heads of the parents." (D. & C 68:25)

[7] Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels. To you mothers in Israel we say God bless and protect you, and give you the strength and courage, the faith and knowledge, the holy love and consecration to duty, that shall enable you to fill to the fullest measure the sacred calling which is yours. To you mothers and mothers-to-be we say: Be chaste, keep pure, live righteously, that your posterity to the last generation may call you blessed. (Conference Report, October 1942, p.12-13)

Counsel to Women

Spencer W. Kimball

Bear in mind, dear sisters, that the eternal blessings which are yours through membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are far, far greater than any other blessings you could possibly receive. No greater recognition can come to you in this world than to be known as a woman of God. No greater status can be conferred upon you than being a daughter of God who experiences true sisterhood, wifehood, and motherhood, or other tasks which influence lives for good.
True, there are some temporary differences and some constraining circumstances. Some of you have lost your husbands through death, others through divorce. Some of you have not yet had the great privilege [page 103] of marriage. But, on the scale of eternity, the missing of these blessings "shall be but a small moment" (see D&C 121:7).

Others of the sisters are experiencing the anguish that often goes with aging. Still others of you now know the uncertainty of being young as you ponder your place in the eternal scheme of things. But real as these challenges are, all of you need to drink in deeply the gospel truths about the eternal nature of your individual identity and the uniqueness of your personality. You need, more and more, to feel the perfect love which our Father in Heaven has for you and to sense the value he places upon you as an individual. Ponder upon these great truths, especially in those moments when (in the stillness of such anxiety as you may experience as an individual) you might otherwise wonder and be perplexed.

Remember, too, as we focus on the glories and importance of family life here, that all of us belong to the eternal family of our Father in Heaven.

Be assured, too, that all faithful sisters, who, through no fault of their own, do not have the privilege during their second estate of being sealed to a worthy man, will have that blessing in eternity. On occasions when you ache for that acceptance and affection which belong to family life on earth, please know that our Father in Heaven is aware of your anguish, and that one day he will bless you beyond your capacity to express.

Sometimes to be tested and proved requires that we be temporarily deprived--but righteous women and men will one day receive all--think of it, sisters--all that our Father has! It is not only worth waiting for; it is worth living for!

Meanwhile, one does not need to be married or a mother in order to keep the first and second great commandments--those of loving God and our fellowmen--on which Jesus said hang all the law and all the prophets.

Some women, because of circumstances beyond their control, must work. We understand that. We understand further that as families are raised, the talents God has given you and blessed you with can often be put to effective use in additional service to mankind. Do not, however, make the mistake of being drawn off into secondary tasks which will cause the neglect of your eternal assignments such as giving birth to and rearing the spirit children of our Father in Heaven. Pray carefully over all your decisions.

We wish you to pursue and to achieve that education, therefore, which will fit you for eternity as well as for full service in mortality. In addition to those basic and vital skills which go with homemaking, there are other skills which can be
appropriately cultivated and which will increase your effectiveness in the home, in the Church, and in the community.

Again, you must be wise in the choices that you make, but we do not desire the women of the Church to be uninformed or ineffective. You will be better mothers and wives, both in this life and in eternity, if you sharpen the skills you have been given and use the talents with which God has blessed you. ("The Role of Righteous Women," *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 102-103)