My dear brothers and sisters, I appreciate this special opportunity to speak especially to the mothers and daughters at this conference. This is a precious relationship and an opportunity for developing greater love and understanding between mothers and daughters. I treasure the memory of my own mother and think often of what she means to me. I look forward with great anticipation to seeing her again someday. We have only one daughter, and I’m so very grateful for her precious companionship.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we all have common ideals and objectives. The Church is a universal brotherhood and sisterhood. We know the importance of the family and are grateful for the comprehensive programs designed for our Monday evening family gatherings. I am sure we think of this as a sacred gospel direction and follow it as faithfully as all other teachings designed for our happiness and best good.

It’s interesting to hear and to read of the comments being made worldwide about the importance of the family to the success of our civilization. I quote:

“Throughout history, nations have been able to survive a multiplicity of disasters, invasions, famines, earthquakes, epidemics, depressions, but they have never been able to survive the disintegration of the family. “The family is the seedbed of economic skills, money habits, attitudes toward work, and the arts of financial independence. The family is a stronger agency of educational success than the school. The family is a stronger teacher of the religious imagination than the church. … What strengthens the family strengthens society. …

“The role of a father, a mother, and of children … is the absolutely critical center of social force. … If things go well with the family, life is worth living; when the family falters, life falls apart.” (Michael Novak, “The Family Out of Favor,” Harper’s, April 1976, pp. 42–43.)

We of the Church have the added knowledge that the family may be the eternal unit of importance if the marriage is sealed for eternity in the holy temple of God. Consequently, this is the objective of all of us. President McKay said, “[The woman] who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters, whose influence will be felt through generations to come, … deserves the highest honor that man can give, and the choicest blessings of God.” (Gospel Ideals, Improvement Era Pub., 1953, pp. 453–54.)

The role of the successful mother is a lifetime of dedication. It is the most exacting and difficult of all professions. Anyone who would say apologetically, “I am only a homemaker,” has not fully appreciated the importance and intricacy of her profession. Some of the attributes required to be successful are an unlimited amount of love and patience, unselfishness, and endurance.

A woman should be skilled in child training, in psychology and sociology, in economics and management, in nutrition and nursing. In fact, a well-rounded education will be a great help in caring for and training a family.

There should be love and harmony between husband and wife. In the home is the opportunity for the mother to teach her children to honor and respect their father, who holds the priesthood of God. It is he who will properly preside and direct the activities of the family.

Children should be cherished with the strongest bonds of affection. No sacrifice is too great to protect our family from evil and to rear them in righteousness. Our constant anxiety is that all family members will live worthy of the eternal blessings promised to those who remain faithful to the end. The sanctity of the home must be zealously guarded, for it is here that morality and righteous habits are formed.

Children have an equal responsibility to contribute to the maintenance of this haven of security. There must be complete confidence and trust between parents and children. Obedience of children to parents is essential to peace in the home. Unselfishness on the part of each member of the family is basic to happiness there.

First and foremost, a woman must learn to do intelligent mothering. This is more than highly emotionalized mothering which showers love and affection upon the child and which might lead her to uphold him in wrongdoing. She must realize that the child’s future, to a large extent, is measured in the
mother’s ability to influence and direct him wisely. In the home must be taught faith, self-control, honesty, and loyalty. The gospel of work must be a part of the child’s training. There must be provided the environment for the development of the child physically, morally, emotionally, and spiritually. We should constantly hold up the child to his very best efforts.

The genuine mother takes time to reach out beyond her own children and sense her responsibility to help all children. Wherever a child is found cold, hungry, or in need of attention or care of any kind, a good mother will render loving and intelligent service. In the home in which there is an intelligent and spiritually strong mother dwells the greatest single influence on the spiritual and moral strength of the family nurtured there.

I would hope that every girl and woman here has the desire and ambition to qualify in two vocations—that of homemaking, and that of preparing to earn a living outside the home, if and when the occasion requires. An unmarried woman is always happier if she has a vocation in which she can be socially of service and financially independent. In no case should she be urged to accept an unworthy companion as a means of support. Any married woman may become a widow without warning. Property may vanish as readily as a husband may die. Thus, any woman may be under the necessity of earning her own living and helping to support dependent children. If she has been trained for the duties and the emergencies of life which may come to her, she will be much happier and have a greater sense of security.

Another valid reason for a woman to prepare herself to fulfill a vocation is that not all of her lifetime could possibly be completely filled with demands of a family, home, and children. The later years of a woman’s life should be viewed as a time that can be socially and professionally productive. When a mother’s children are reared, or if she is childless, the years after forty or fifty may begin to look bleak. Her real life’s work may seem done, when in reality it has only changed. The active woman cannot hold her hands, so she looks about for something to take up her leisure time. What should it be? Charity? General meddlesomeness? Shall she become a burden or shall she embark upon a new adventure? Happy the woman who has the foresight to see that through forty years of experience, she has matured the ability to commence a grand and useful second half of her life. Let her study a profession or adopt a trade, or find some absorbing subject for study and research. There are many learning opportunities for senior citizens. This is a rare opportunity for advanced study in some subject of special interest. There is no place nor time when one can justify one’s self in idly sitting by to vegetate. Keeping mentally, physically, and spiritually growing constantly is the way to continue the happy, useful life.

The Church holds special challenges in temple or missionary work. Genealogical research is also challenging and calls for workers. If one has a literary talent, active or latent, these are choice years to be productive in this area. Have you written your own autobiography or the biography of a father, mother, or grandparent who did not get this important work done? We all owe it to ourselves, our posterity, and our relatives to leave a written record of our life’s activities.

In addition, there are many opportunities for service to others. The world is full of lonely, troubled people who need a helping hand, who need a listening ear or a friendly visit or a comforting letter. Our watchword should be “Never stop growing and serving.”

We have talked about the importance of good family relations, about the importance of a woman’s education, and about intelligent mothering, of giving of ourselves to others in service. And some may ask, “Where can I get help in achieving all of these objectives?” Sisters, we women of the church of Jesus Christ are most fortunate to have an organization revealed to a prophet of God which is designed to help us in achieving and fulfilling all of our basic needs. We have the Relief Society organization specifically for this very purpose. If there are any of you here eligible for membership in this organization who have not taken advantage of it, I would urge you to do so. Its varied programs are designed for our growth and happiness. There is opportunity for participation for each member. It’s a wonderful place to make friends and be of service. I would urge you to be active in this great worldwide sisterhood of the Church now. The visiting teaching program is designed to give us the opportunity to have and be a friend in need. I should like to tell you that it has been my privilege to serve for more than fifty years as a visiting teacher in the wards in which I have lived, and I find great joy and satisfaction in this opportunity.

I bear my testimony to the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and express my deep gratitude to my Heavenly Father for membership in his church and kingdom. I know that Christ is our Redeemer, and I express my love for him. And I pray for each of us, that we may know the joy and satisfaction of membership and service in his church. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.