



WOMEN'S TOPICS FOR  
INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

# "A Wide and Extensive Sphere of Action"





## WOMEN'S TOPICS FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

This course of study is based on sermons and talks given by latter-day apostles and prophets and by Church auxiliary leaders. The course may also include articles written by professionals, such as clinical therapists, or by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have valuable personal experiences to share. This course of study contains two groups of lessons: (1) lessons for gospel study based on talks given by Church leaders, and (2) lessons based on chapters of the book *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011).

### Gospel Study

Charity Never Faileth  
First Observe, Then Serve  
Forget Me Not  
Is Faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ Written in Our Hearts?  
Raised in Hope  
Sharing Your Light  
Sisterhood: Oh, How We Need Each Other  
The Savior's Respect for Women  
The Words We Speak  
This Is a Test. It Is Only a Test.  
Wanted: Hands and Hearts to Hasten the Work  
We Have Great Reason to Rejoice

### Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society

Relief Society: A Restoration of an Ancient Pattern  
"Something Better": The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo  
"Cleave unto the Covenants": Exodus, Migration, and Settlement  
"A Wide and Extensive Sphere of Action"  
"Charity Never Faileth"  
A Worldwide Circle of Sisterhood  
"Pure Religion": Watchcare and Ministering through Visiting Teaching  
Blessings of the Priesthood for All: An Inseparable Connection with the Priesthood  
"Guardians of the Hearth": Establishing, Nurturing, and Defending the Family  
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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



# "A Wide and Extensive Sphere of Action"

FROM *DAUGHTERS IN MY KINGDOM: THE HISTORY AND WORK OF RELIEF SOCIETY*

On December 26, 1866, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles met under the direction of President Brigham Young. Toward the end of the meeting, President Young, the second President of the Church, expressed a desire to reestablish Relief Societies throughout the Church.<sup>1</sup>

The following year, President Young felt increased urgency to assist bishops in their responsibility to seek out and help those in need. Initiating an effort to reestablish Relief Society in every ward, he shared the following counsel with bishops: "Let [the sisters] organize Female Relief Societies in the various wards. We have many talented women among us, and we wish their help in this matter. Some may think this is a trifling thing, but it is not; and you will find that the sisters will be the mainspring of the movement. Give them the benefit of your wisdom and experience, give them your influence, guide and direct them wisely and well, and they will find rooms for the poor and obtain the means for supporting them ten times quicker than even the Bishop could."<sup>2</sup>

Once again the sisters would be organized under the authority of the priesthood and, as the Prophet Joseph Smith had said, "placed in a situation where [they could] act according to those sympathies which God [had] planted in [their] bosoms."<sup>3</sup> They would strengthen their families and others in need, both temporally and spiritually. Through this service, their own faith and righteousness would increase. Sister Eliza R. Snow taught that the Relief Society would "refine and elevate [the sisters], and above all strengthen them in the faith of the Gospel, and in so doing, may be instrumental in saving many."<sup>4</sup>

## A Relief Society in each ward

President Young called Sister Snow to serve the Church by traveling throughout the territory, helping bishops organize Relief Societies. She said, "President Young instructed the Bishops to organize Female Relief Societies in their various Wards, and . . . repeated the requisition, extending it to all the settlements, calling upon the sisters to enter into organizations, not only for the relief of the poor, but for the accomplishment of every good and noble work."<sup>5</sup>



Left to right: Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Emmeline B. Wells, and Eliza R. Snow

As the secretary of the first Female Relief Society in Nauvoo, Illinois, Sister Snow had kept detailed minutes of the meetings, including the instructions from Joseph Smith (see [the Women's Topics lesson titled "Something Better"]). On the trek from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley, she had carefully safeguarded her minute book. She understood the importance of what had been taught to the sisters in those meetings. She knew how the society should be structured, and she remembered the principles upon which it was established. She understood that the organization was a fundamental part of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "It is no ordinary thing,"



she explained, "to meet in an organization of this nature. This organization belongs to the organization of the Church of Christ, in all dispensations when it is in perfection."<sup>6</sup> Now, as she traveled from ward to ward, she taught from the minutes again and again.

## Expanding the sisters' vision and influence

In addition to asking Sister Snow to work with priesthood leaders in each ward, President Young expanded her assignment. He said, "I want you to instruct the sisters."<sup>7</sup> Although she would not be set apart as the second Relief Society general president until 1880, she was given the same responsibilities the Lord had given Sister Emma Smith: "to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church, according as it shall be given thee by my Spirit" (D&C 25:7).

President Young also shared counsel with the women of the Church. His exhortations and Sister Snow's teachings combined to expand the sisters' vision of their power for good in their families, in the Church, and in the world. Sister Snow said:

"If any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are feeling in the least [limited] in their present spheres, they will now find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed. . . . President Young has turned the key to a wide and extensive sphere of action and usefulness."<sup>8</sup>

A review of some of the teachings and efforts that defined the Relief Society in the latter part of the 1800s shows how the reestablished Relief Society increased the vision and the righteous influence of Latter-day Saint women.

## Charity

True to the pattern established by Joseph and Emma Smith in Nauvoo, charity continued to be the foundation of all things, both spiritual and temporal, that Relief Society sisters were organized to do. President Young taught:

"All this is embraced in our religion. Every good word and work, all things temporal, and all things spiritual, things in heaven, things on earth, and things that are under the earth are circumscribed

by our religion. . . . If we do these things, and delight in doing right, our feet will be made [firm] and immovable like the bases of these everlasting hills. We ought not to desire anything [except] on righteous principles, and if we want right, let us then deal it out to others, being kind and full of love and charity to all."<sup>9</sup>

## Removing worldly influences

In his home, President Brigham Young taught his daughters to "retrench in everything that is bad and worthless, and improve in everything that is good and beautiful."<sup>10</sup> To retrench is to remove something. When President Young counseled his daughters to retrench, he meant for them to turn from worldly, frivolous, and immodest behavior and clothing. He also preached retrenchment and reform to the entire Church.

"This is what we desire to instill into the hearts of the sisters—to be useful in their sphere and not be discouraged because of difficulties in the way, but trust in God and look to Him, and His marvelous blessings, I will promise you, will be poured out upon you."

President Lorenzo Snow  
*Young Woman's Journal*, Sept. 1895, 578

In counseling the Saints to forsake the ways of the world, President Young usually gave practical counsel that related to matters of daily living. He encouraged frugality and hard work. For example, he counseled the sisters in Relief Society to reform their eating and housekeeping patterns. But retrenchment meant more than adopting a simpler lifestyle; it meant a change of heart. Sisters were to set themselves apart from the rest of the world—truly becoming Saints, the Lord's people. Sister Eliza R. Snow said: "What do I want to retrench from? It is my ignorance and every thing that is not of God."<sup>11</sup>

## Personal revelation

Sister Snow followed the counsel of priesthood leaders, and she promised her sisters in the Relief



Society that they would be blessed as they did the same. She also taught that individual women could receive inspiration to guide them in their personal lives, their families, and their Church responsibilities. She said: "Tell the sisters to go forth and discharge their duties, in humility and faithfulness and the Spirit of God will rest upon them and they will be blest in their labors. Let them seek for wisdom instead of power and they will have all the power they have wisdom to exercise."<sup>12</sup>

Her inspired instruction helped Relief Society sisters face the trials of their day. She taught that if they would continually seek guidance and comfort from the Holy Ghost, they could enjoy peace even in the midst of adversity. She said that the Holy Ghost "satisfies and fills up every longing of the human heart, and fills up every vacuum. When I am filled with that Spirit," she continued, "my soul is satisfied, and I can say in good earnest, that the trifling things of the day do not seem to stand in my way at all. But just let me lose my hold of that spirit and power of the Gospel, and partake of the spirit of the world, in the slightest degree, and trouble comes; there is something wrong. I am tried, and what will comfort me? You cannot impart comfort to me that will satisfy the immortal mind, but that which comes from the Fountain above. And is it not our privilege to so live that we can have this constantly flowing into our souls?"<sup>13</sup>

## Defending the practice of plural marriage

In the early days of the Church, the practice of plural marriage was revealed to Joseph Smith (see D&C 132). Although this practice was initially difficult for many to accept, the faithful Saints knew that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. They followed the Lord's will as it was revealed to their prophet. They made covenants with God and were strong and devout in keeping those covenants.

When the Relief Society was reestablished in the late 1860s, plural marriage was still part of Church members' lives. However, many people in the United States believed that women who lived the law of plural marriage were degraded and abused. As a result of a general misunderstanding about the Latter-day Saints and their beliefs, the

national government passed legislation forbidding polygamous marriages.

## Sisters defend plural marriage to newspaper reporters in Salt Lake City

A group of Latter-day Saint women gathered in Salt Lake City in January 1870 in response to this legislation. In the presence of newspaper reporters from across the United States, these women expressed their support for living prophets and for the practices of the Church. They defended themselves and their husbands and proclaimed their faith and their covenants. Sister Eliza R. Snow said: "It was high time [to] rise up in the dignity of our calling and speak for ourselves. . . . The world does not know us, and truth and justice to our brethren and to ourselves demands us to speak. . . . We are not inferior to the ladies of the world, and we do not want to appear so."<sup>14</sup>

One Latter-day Saint woman expressed the feelings of many others when she said: "There is no spot on this wide earth where kindness and affection are more bestowed upon woman, and her rights so sacredly defended as in Utah. We are here to express our love for each other, and to exhibit to the world our devotion to God our Heavenly Father; and to show our willingness to comply with the requirements of the Gospel; and the law of [plural marriage] is one of its requirements that we are resolved to honor, teach, and practise, which may God grant us strength to do."<sup>15</sup>

Newspaper reporters said this was a "remarkable meeting."<sup>16</sup> One reporter wrote, "In logic and in rhetoric the so-called degraded ladies of Mormondom are quite equal to the . . . women of the East."<sup>17</sup> During the next few months, many more women participated in such meetings throughout the territory.

## Women showed faith when the practice of polygamy was ended

In 1890, President Wilford Woodruff, the fourth President of the Church, received a revelation that led to the Church's discontinuance of the practice of plural marriage. He [described] this



revelation in a document known as the Manifesto. About writing the Manifesto, he said: "The God of heaven commanded me to do what I did do; and when the hour came that I was commanded to do that, it was all clear to me. I went before the Lord, and I wrote what the Lord told me to write."<sup>18</sup>

Because the people had accepted the prophetic counsel to enter into plural marriages and had made and kept their covenants, this new revelation was once again difficult for many, but faithful Latter-day Saints determined again to follow the prophet. On the day that the general membership of the Church heard the Manifesto and approved it, Sister Zina D. H. Young, who was serving as the third Relief Society general president at the time, said, "Today the hearts of all were tried but looked to God and submitted."<sup>19</sup>

The women of the Church who, by revelation, embraced plural marriage and who, by revelation, later accepted the Manifesto are worthy of admiration and appreciation. They were strictly obedient to their covenants and the counsel of the living prophet. Today these women are honored by their faithful posterity.

Helen Mar Whitney, who lived the law of plural marriage, wrote, "We may read the history of martyrs and mighty conquerors, and of many great and good men and women, but that of the noble women and fair daughters of Zion, whose faith in the promises of Israel's God enabled them to triumph over self and obey His higher law, and assist His servants to establish it upon the earth, . . . I feel sure there was kept by the angels an account of their works which will yet be found in the records of eternity, written in letters of gold."<sup>20</sup>

### Articulating beliefs

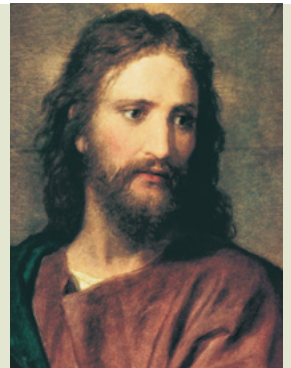
Sister Eliza R. Snow was a gifted writer and public speaker. She was known by many as "Zion's poetess" because of her skill with the English language.<sup>21</sup> She was knowledgeable, organized, faithful, untiring, unflinching, wise, and articulate, and she followed the promptings of the Spirit as she helped build the Lord's kingdom. She frequently shared her knowledge and her testimony, and she encouraged Latter-day Saint women to do the

same in Relief Society meetings—not to depend on others to always teach them.

Some women felt reluctant and unprepared to speak in public. Sister Snow gave the following counsel to such sisters: "Do not let your president have to say all. . . . Has not God endowed you with the gift of speech? . . . If you are endowed with the Spirit of God, no matter how simple your thoughts may be, they will be edifying to those who hear you."<sup>22</sup>

## Do It Yourself

Imagine that you are living in the early 1900s. Write an article that could be published in the *Relief Society Magazine*. For example, consider writing about a personal skill you could share or a spiritual thought that could encourage someone else who is incarcerated.



### Eliza R. Snow helped Emily S. Richards learn to speak in public

Emily S. Richards said that Sister Snow helped her learn to speak in public: "The first time [she] asked me to speak in meeting, I could not, and she said, 'Never mind, but when you are asked to speak again, try and have something to say,' and I did."<sup>23</sup> Sister Richards continued to improve in her ability as a public speaker, and in 1889 she spoke at the National Woman Suffrage Association convention in Washington, D. C.

A journalist described Sister Richards as "trembling slightly under the gaze of the multitude, yet reserved, self possessed, dignified, and as pure and sweet as an angel. . . . It was not the words themselves but the gentle spirit [that] went with the words and carried winning grace to every heart."<sup>24</sup>



"Feast upon the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3). Detail from *Sabbath Study*, by Sheri Lynn Boyer Doty. © IRI. Courtesy Sheri Lynn Boyer Doty.

## Relief Society sisters today share their knowledge of the gospel

Today, Relief Society sisters follow the pattern set by Sister Snow, Sister Richards, and other early members of the Relief Society. They diligently seek gospel knowledge and then share that knowledge with others. In doing so, they follow the counsel of latter-day prophets. President Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth President of the Church, said:

"I stress . . . the deep need each woman has to study the scriptures. We want our homes to be blessed with sister scriptionaries—whether you are single or married, young or old, widowed or living in a family.

"Regardless of your particular circumstances, as you become more and more familiar with the truths of the scriptures, you will be more and more effective in keeping the second great commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. Become scholars of the scriptures—not to put others down, but to lift them up! After all, who has any greater need to 'treasure up' the truths of the gospel (on which they may call in their moments

of need) than do women and mothers who do so much nurturing and teaching?"

President Kimball testified that Relief Society sisters will become a powerful influence for good upon the "good women of the world" as they "reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives."<sup>25</sup>

Sister Snow, President Kimball, and many other Church leaders have shared a vision of Relief Society's influence for good. As sisters articulate their beliefs by word and deed, they can strengthen each other's faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. They can help each other prepare to receive all the blessings available in Heavenly Father's plan of happiness.

## Temporal self-reliance

The Latter-day Saints gathered in the Salt Lake Valley after having been persecuted and forced from their homes and communities multiple times. Now that they had migrated to a faraway and isolated desert, President Brigham Young wanted them to flourish and establish a permanent home for themselves. He wanted them to be safe from physical harm, and he also wanted them to keep themselves safe from worldly influences that could harm their faith and their testimonies. He wanted them to be independent from worldly influences, both temporally and spiritually.

This meant that the Saints needed to learn skills that would allow them to take care of all their needs. In this effort, President Young had great trust in the capacities, talents, faithfulness, and willingness of the women. He reminded Relief Society sisters to fulfill their duties at home with their husbands and children.<sup>26</sup> He also taught other duties of temporal self-reliance, some of which are mentioned below. While many specific temporal duties are different today, the principles behind these duties remain constant: Latter-day Saints are counseled to do all they can to provide the temporal necessities of life for themselves and their families.

*Sewing.* President Young advised sisters to sew clothes for themselves and their families. He said, "I call upon my sisters to . . . create your own fashions, and make your clothing to please yourselves



independent of outside influences."<sup>27</sup> Sister Eliza R. Snow reported that he encouraged sisters to establish "fashions that would be becoming—such as would be worthy the patronage of sensible, refined and intelligent women who stand, as we in reality do, at the head of the world."<sup>28</sup>

*Silk.* President Young established the Deseret Silk Association, with Zina D. H. Young as its president. This group raised silkworms, feeding them mulberry leaves. Sister Young abhorred the worms and even suffered nightmares about them, but she obediently hatched and raised them in her own cocoonery and taught others to do the same. Under her direction, the Deseret Silk Association raised silkworms for over 20 years. Although their work never provided income, they were able to spin lovely silk for themselves.



Early Relief Society sisters harvesting silk, about 1890

*Wheat.* President Young counseled the sisters, "Learn to sustain yourselves; lay up grain and flour, and save it against a day of scarcity."<sup>29</sup> Emmeline B. Wells, who later became the fifth Relief Society general president, was assigned to be in charge of the central wheat committee.

In this venture, the women were motivated by their motherly desire to protect their families from hunger. Sister Wells said: "Who is there that can feel these things as deeply as a mother can? Think what it would be to hear your little one cry for bread."<sup>30</sup>

Ward Relief Society presidents met periodically to discuss ways to procure and store the grain. The willing expression of Sarah Howard, a ward Relief Society president in Salt Lake City, represented the sentiments of many sisters at the time. She said: "I feel it is a privilege the Lord has given us, and we will try and be united in it. For my part I will try and do all I can, and I feel that the Lord will open a way whereby we can obtain grain, although it is

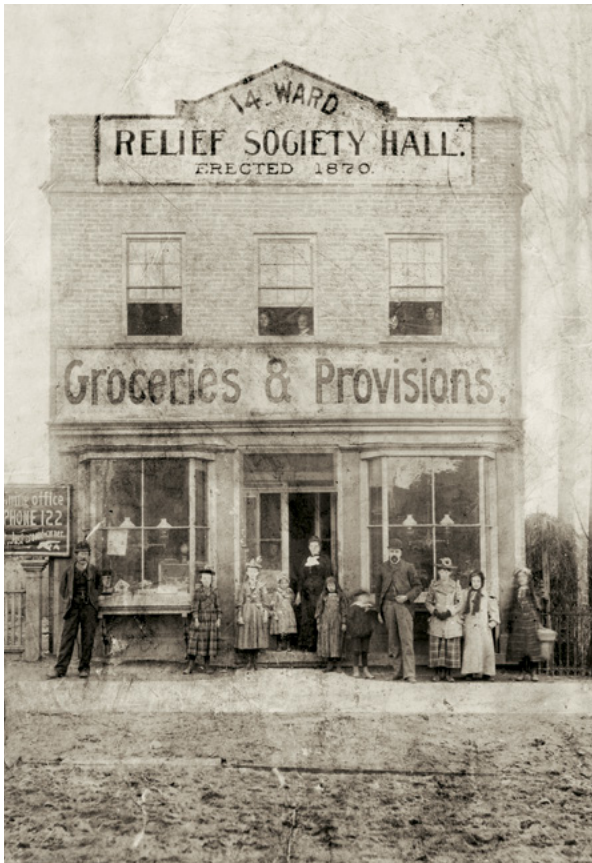
late in the season."<sup>31</sup> Sarah M. Kimball, who also served as a ward Relief Society president, already had a storage plan in mind when she came to one meeting. In the first year of the project, her ward Relief Society built a fireproof granary with a capacity to store 1,000 bushels of wheat.

President John Taylor of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged brethren in Kaysville, Utah, to help the sisters in this effort. He told of a woman who felt that her husband was "a little too liberal and careless" with the family's finances. Each week she slipped part of her household budget into the family Bible. "Some years afterwards there came a financial crisis, and [the] husband was troubled. The wife readily perceived the change in her husband's countenance, and she asked him to tell her the cause of his trouble. He told her that he had a [bill] coming due, and he was afraid he could not meet it. She tried to encourage him by telling him to have faith in God, and referred to the good, old Book, telling him to read it, that he might get some comfort from it. She handed him the Bible, and as he opened it and turned over the leaves the [money] began to drop out." President Taylor concluded, "We may find a time when we may need this wheat that our sisters are storing up; let us not be too confident about our affairs, and do what we can by way of helping them."<sup>32</sup>

Sister Emmeline B. Wells told the sisters that their diligence in this effort would be "the temporal salvation of this people in case of emergency."<sup>33</sup> This was fulfilled in 1898 and 1899, when Relief Society wheat provided sustenance during a severe drought in southern Utah.

The sisters' diligence in preserving wheat allowed Latter-day Saint women to serve people beyond their families and fellow Saints. The Church sent Relief Society wheat to American Indians in Utah; to survivors of a terrible earthquake and fire in San Francisco, California, in 1906; and to people in China who were suffering from a famine in 1907.<sup>34</sup> The wheat also provided nourishment for thousands during World War I, when the Relief Society sold 200,000 bushels to the United States government.<sup>35</sup> This legacy of preservation and service helped establish a pattern for the Church's present efforts to give humanitarian aid throughout the world, wherever people are in need.





A Relief Society meeting hall, on the floor above a grocery store in Salt Lake City, Utah, 1892

*Health care and medical education.* In September 1873, Sister Eliza R. Snow reported that President Brigham Young wanted “a good many [sisters] to get a classical education, and then get a degree for Medicine.”<sup>36</sup>

Sister Zina D. H. Young serves as an example of a Relief Society sister who gave great service in the medical field. She was told in her patriarchal blessing that she had the gift to heal, and she prepared herself to take advantage of this gift by taking a course in obstetrics—the medical practice dealing with the birth of children. She helped deliver many babies in the Salt Lake Valley. In her service, her practical education complemented her gifts to nurture physically, heal spiritually, and comfort emotionally. Sister Emmeline B. Wells said of her: “Numberless instances might be cited of her ministrations among the sick, when she seemed to be inspired by some higher power than her own . . . when courage and faith had failed in those around the sickbed. At such times she seemed an angel of mercy in very deed.”<sup>37</sup>

Despite all the service Sister Young gave as she relied on her spiritual gifts and limited education, she was acutely aware that she could not meet all the medical needs of the growing population in Utah. She encouraged other Latter-day Saint women to follow President Young’s counsel to receive medical training.

Sister Snow said: “Are there here, now, any sisters who have ambition enough, and who realize the necessity of it, for Zion’s sake, to take up this study? There are some who are naturally inclined to be nurses; and such ones would do well to study Medicine. . . . If they cannot meet their own expenses, we have means of doing so.”<sup>38</sup>

With this encouragement, some Relief Society sisters studied medicine in the eastern United States. They came back to Utah as doctors and taught classes in midwifery and home nursing. Emma Andersen Liljenquist, who attended the classes in Utah, recorded some of her experiences:

“I enjoyed [the course] very much, and after being set apart by Apostle John Henry Smith and several of the others, I returned home to do my work, having been promised by the Apostles that if I lived right I should always know what to do in case of any difficulties. . . .

“That promise has been fulfilled to the very letter. Many times when one of my patients was seriously ill, I have asked my Heavenly Father for assistance, and in every case it was given to me. One in particular was a lady who had just given birth to a baby and hemorrhage set in. The husband called the doctor, but he did not realize that it was so serious. I . . . asked the Lord to help us. The hemorrhage ceased and I did the necessary things for her. When the doctor arrived, he said he could hardly believe what had happened, but said I had done exactly what he would have done. . . .

“. . . I have brought over one thousand babies [into the world]. Once again I give thanks to my Heavenly Father for His help and the strength the Lord has given me, for without it I could not have rendered this service to my sisters or our community. One of the most touching things



about a birth is that the mother's first concern is about her baby, not herself."<sup>39</sup>

In 1882 the Relief Society established the Deseret Hospital, "where the sick of the Lord's people could be attended and have the benefit of the ordinances of the Church [priesthood blessings] as well as skilful treatment."<sup>40</sup> The hospital continued for a little more than a decade until its operating costs exceeded the donations given and other facilities became available.

## Women's suffrage (the right to vote)

In February 1870 the territorial government of Utah granted women the right to vote in government elections. At that time, the territory of Wyoming was the only other place in the United States where women were given this right. Later the national government rescinded this privilege as part of the punishment for Latter-day Saints living the law of plural marriage. But Latter-day Saint women remained vocal and articulate about their rights. Many sisters actively sought women's suffrage, or the right to vote. Their increasing ability to speak articulately was a blessing when they needed to represent themselves as strong, dignified, and ennobled women. Through their efforts, they regained the right to vote when Utah was granted statehood in the United States of America. They also gained the respect of other women's movements in the United States and around the world.

## Publications

Under Sister Eliza R. Snow's leadership, the Relief Society supported a newspaper titled the *Woman's Exponent*. This newspaper was written for Latter-day Saint women to help them learn about their work, their lives, and their history. Sister Emmeline B. Wells served as the editor during most of the newspaper's publication. In her diary she wrote, "I desire to do all in my power to help elevate the condition of my own people, especially women."<sup>41</sup> She later wrote, "I have desired with all my heart to do those things that would advance women in moral and spiritual as well as educational work and tend to the rolling on of the work of God upon the earth."<sup>42</sup>

After 42 years of publication, the *Woman's Exponent* was discontinued in 1914. The next year, the Relief Society began publishing the *Relief Society Magazine*, which included lessons for weekly Relief Society meetings. The magazine was an important resource for sisters. Women treasured their copies, learning from them and teaching from them. In 1971, the *Relief Society Magazine* and other magazines for English-speaking adult members of the Church were merged into one magazine, called the *Ensign*. Since that time, the *Ensign* has provided articles to instruct and inspire Relief Society sisters.

"By the power of the living God we can and we will be self-sustaining and be the most independent creatures under the celestial world."

President Harold B. Lee  
*Church News*, Feb. 12, 1944, 8

The Church began publishing magazines in languages other than English in the mid-1800s. Many of these magazines were published under the direction of mission presidents. In 1967 they were unified into one magazine with the same format and content, translated into many different languages. This international magazine—now called the *Liahona*—has always provided articles to help sisters live the gospel.

Since 1987, visiting teaching messages have been published in the *Liahona* and the *Ensign*. Visiting teaching messages are also distributed as separate publications in areas where the Church is new and membership is limited.

## Preparing children and young women for service in God's kingdom

In the late 1800s, priesthood and Relief Society leaders organized efforts to improve the lives of children and young women. Acting on President Brigham Young's call to reform and retrench (see page 45), Relief Society leaders established the Young Ladies Department of their Cooperative Junior and Senior Retrenchment Association in



1870. This led to today's Young Women organization. The Primary was organized for children in 1878. Initially, Relief Society leaders supervised the work of these organizations under the direction of priesthood leaders. In 1880, President John Taylor, the third President of the Church, extended callings to a general Relief Society presidency, a general Young Women presidency, and a general Primary presidency, differentiating the work of these three organizations.

Since then, Relief Society sisters have always led and served in the Young Women and Primary organizations. They have also strengthened the rising generation through service in other organizations, such as Sunday School and seminaries and institutes.

### Moving forward

The reestablishment of the Relief Society led to greater responsibilities and greater opportunities for Latter-day Saint women. Eliza R. Snow declared:

"Don't you see that our sphere is increasing? Our sphere of action will continually widen, and no woman in Zion need[s] to mourn because her sphere is too narrow.

"God bless you, my sisters, and encourage you, that you may be filled with light, and realize that you have no interests but in the welfare of Zion. Let your first business be to perform your duties at home. But, inasmuch as you are wise stewards, you will find time for social duties, because these are incumbent upon us as daughters and mothers in Zion. By seeking to perform every duty you will find that your capacity will increase, and you will be astonished at what you can accomplish."<sup>43</sup>

Sister Snow's personal expression of faith and optimism can serve as a guide for all Latter-day Saints. "I will go forward," she said. "I will smile at the rage of the tempest, and ride fearlessly and triumphantly across the boisterous ocean of circumstance . . . and the *'testimony of Jesus'* will light up a lamp that will guide my vision through the portals of immortality."<sup>44</sup>

[Note: Subheadings were altered and added to this chapter. Scripture references were moved from the endnotes into the text of the chapter.]

## Endnotes

1. See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, Dec. 26, 1866, Church History Library.
2. Brigham Young, "Remarks," *Deseret Evening News*, Dec. 14, 1867, 2; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 131.
3. Joseph Smith, in Relief Society Minute Book, Nauvoo, Illinois, Apr. 28, 1842, Church History Library, 38; spelling standardized.
4. Eliza R. Snow, "Female Relief Society," *Deseret News*, Apr. 22, 1868, 81.
5. Eliza R. Snow, "Female Relief Society," 81.
6. Eliza R. Snow, in Relief Society Minutes, Third Ward, Salt Lake Stake, Sept. 23, 1868, Church History Library, 17.
7. Brigham Young, quoted in *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (1995), 35.
8. Eliza R. Snow, "Female Relief Society," 81.
9. Brigham Young, "Remarks," *Deseret News Weekly*, May 13, 1868, 3; punctuation standardized.
10. In Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association* (1911), 9–10.
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# "A Wide and Extensive Sphere of Action"

## RESPONSE FORM

1. For what purposes was the Relief Society reestablished in Utah?

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2. Why is Sister Eliza R. Snow an excellent role model for women in the Church?

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3. How can you apply the Relief Society principle of self-reliance in your current situation and in the future?

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4. How can you improve your abilities to read and speak effectively while you are incarcerated?

Lined area for writing response to question 4.

5. What can you do to study the Church's printed magazines and other publications? What good will this study do for you personally? Is there anyone you could share these publications with?

Lined area for writing response to question 5.

6. What else have you learned in this lesson that you would like to share?

Lined area for writing response to question 6.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Offender #: \_\_\_\_\_

Return this response form to your family member or priesthood leader or to the address below:

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