



WOMEN'S TOPICS FOR  
INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

# "Guardians of the Hearth": Establishing, Nurturing, and Defending the Family





## 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



# "Guardians of the Hearth": Establishing, Nurturing, and Defending the Family

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

On September 23, 1995, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the fifteenth President of the Church, stood before the women of the Church in a general Relief Society meeting. He expressed gratitude for the faithfulness and diligence of Latter-day Saint women—young and old, married and single, with children and without children. Acknowledging the serious challenges they faced, he offered encouragement, counsel, and warning to help them fulfill their responsibilities and find joy in life. Toward the end of his address, he said:

"With so much of sophistry [falsehood with the intent to deceive] that is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurements and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn. In furtherance of this we of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles now issue a proclamation to the Church and to the world as a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family which the prophets, seers, and revelators of this church have repeatedly stated throughout its history."<sup>1</sup> Then he read "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." This was the first time the proclamation was read publicly.

In the proclamation, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declare that "happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ." They "solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is

ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." They remind husbands and wives of their "solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children."<sup>2</sup>

As the proclamation's title emphasizes, it was published as "A Proclamation to the World"—reminding all people, including the leaders of nations, of the eternal importance of the family. Eight months after presenting the proclamation, President Hinckley spoke in a press conference in Tokyo, Japan. He said: "Why do we have this proclamation on the family now? Because the family is under attack. All across the world families are falling apart. The place to begin to improve society is in the home. Children do, for the most part, what they are taught. We are trying to make the world better by making the family stronger."<sup>3</sup>

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. . . . She has been placed here to help to enrich, to protect, and to guard the home—which is society's basic and most noble institution.

President Spencer W. Kimball





The testimonies of Relief Society sisters show that in addition to being a proclamation to the entire world, this statement of doctrine has meaning for each family and each individual in the Church. The principles in the proclamation have touched the hearts of sisters in all circumstances.

## Relief Society leaders recalled their impressions when they first heard "The Family: A Proclamation to the World"



Barbara Thompson, counselor in the Relief Society general presidency

Sister Barbara Thompson, who later was called to serve as a counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, was in the Salt Lake Tabernacle when President Hinckley read the proclamation there. "That was a great occasion," she recalled. "I felt the significance of the message. I also found myself thinking, 'This is a great guide for parents. It is also a big responsibility for parents.' I thought for a moment that it really didn't pertain too much to me since I wasn't married and didn't have any children. But almost as quickly I thought, 'But it does pertain to me. I am a member of a family. I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a cousin, a niece, and a granddaughter. I do have responsibilities—and blessings—because I am a member of a family. Even if I were the only living member of my family,

I am still a member of God's family, and I have a responsibility to help strengthen other families.'"<sup>4</sup>

Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, who later served as the fourteenth Relief Society general president, was also in the Tabernacle when President Hinckley read the proclamation. She recalled: "Stillness was in the congregation but also a sense of excitement, a reaction of 'Yes—we need help with our families! I remember feeling it was so right. Tears ran down my cheeks. As I looked at the sisters seated near me, they seemed to be experiencing similar feelings. There was so much in the proclamation that I couldn't wait to get a copy and study it. The proclamation affirms the dignity of women. And to think that it was first given to the women of the Church at the general Relief Society meeting.'"<sup>5</sup>

Why did the First Presidency choose to announce the proclamation on the family in a general Relief Society meeting? After President Hinckley read it, he provided an answer to that question. "You are the guardians of the hearth," he told the sisters. "You are the bearers of the children. You are they who nurture them and establish within them the habits of their lives. No other work reaches so close to divinity as does the nurturing of the sons and daughters of God."<sup>6</sup>

President James E. Faust, President Hinckley's second counselor, added the following explanation: "Because you mothers are the heart and soul of any family, it was appropriate that it [the proclamation] was first read in the general Relief Society meeting."<sup>7</sup>

## The family proclamation supports longstanding "standards, doctrines, and practices"

The teachings in the family proclamation were not new in 1995. As President Hinckley stated, they were a "reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices."<sup>8</sup> They had been "central to the Creator's plan" even before He created the earth.<sup>9</sup>

Sister Julie B. Beck, the fifteenth Relief Society general president, taught: "In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a theology of the family that is based on the Creation, the Fall,



and the Atonement [of Jesus Christ]. The Creation of the earth provided a place where families could live. . . . The Fall provided a way for the family to grow. . . . The Atonement allows for the family to be sealed together eternally."<sup>10</sup>

Faithful women and men have been true to this theology of the family and followed these standards, doctrines, and practices whenever the gospel has been on the earth. "Our glorious Mother Eve" and our "Father Adam" were leaders for their children, teaching them "the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (see D&C 138:38–39; Moses 5:10–12). Rebekah and Isaac ensured that priesthood covenants and blessings would not be lost for their family.<sup>11</sup> A widow in the city of Zarephath was able to take care of her son because she had faith to follow the prophet Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:8–24). Two thousand sixty young warriors fought valiantly to protect their families, trusting their mothers' promise that "God would deliver them" (see Alma 56:47–48). As a young man, Jesus Christ "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," nurtured by the love and concern of His mother, Mary, and her husband, Joseph (see Luke 2:40–52).



Rebekah, here with Abraham's servant, understood the importance of marriage in the covenant (see Genesis 24:1–28). *Rebekah at the Well*, by Michael Deas. © 1995 IRI.

"We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility."

First Presidency (Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, James E. Faust)

*Ensign*, June 1999, 80

With the restoration of the gospel, early members of the Church increased in their understanding of the importance of the family (see D&C 68:25–28; 93:36–48; 131:1–3). The Saints learned that by the power of the priesthood, they could receive temple ordinances and covenants that would bind their families together forever. This promise strengthened Latter-day Saints in fulfilling their roles as sons and daughters of God.

Early Relief Society leaders encouraged women to make their families a central focus in their lives. Sister Eliza R. Snow, the second Relief Society general president, never had children of her own. Nevertheless, she recognized the importance of a mother's influence. She counseled Relief Society sisters, "Let your first business be to perform your duties at home."<sup>12</sup> Sister Zina D. H. Young, the third Relief Society general president, taught sisters to "make the home the centre of attraction, where the spirit of love, peace and unity will dwell, and that sweet charity that thinketh no evil will ever abide [see 1 Corinthians 13:5]."<sup>13</sup>

## Mary Fielding Smith withstood hardships to bring her family to Utah

Mary Fielding Smith set an example as a strong, loving mother. Her son Joseph F. Smith, who became the sixth President of the Church, recalled:

"I can remember my mother in the days of Nauvoo. I remember seeing her and her helpless children hustled into a flat boat with such



things as she could carry out of the house at the commencement of the bombardment of the city of Nauvoo by the mob. I remember the hardships of the Church there and on the way to Winter Quarters, on the Missouri river, and how she prayed for her children and family on her wearisome journey. . . . I can remember all the trials incident to our endeavors to move out with the Camp of Israel, coming to these valleys of the mountains without teams sufficient to draw our wagons; and being without the means to get those teams necessary, she yoked up her cows and calves, and tied two wagons together, and we started to come to Utah in this crude and helpless condition, and my mother said—"The Lord will open the way;" but how He would open the way no one knew. I was a little boy then, and I drove team and did my share of the work. I remember coming upon her in her secret prayer to God to enable her to accomplish her mission. Do you not think that these things make an impression upon the mind? Do you think I can forget the example of my mother? No; her faith and example will ever be bright in my memory. What do I think! Every breath I breathe, every feeling of my soul rises to God in thankfulness to Him that my mother was a Saint, that she was a woman of God, pure and faithful, and that she would suffer death rather than betray the trust committed to her; that she would suffer poverty and distress in the wilderness and try to hold her family together rather than remain in Babylon. That is the spirit which imbued her and her children."<sup>14</sup>

### Relief Society helps women fulfill their temporal responsibilities and eternal roles

In harmony with timeless principles about the sacred nature of home and family, Melchizedek Priesthood quorums help men fulfill their responsibilities as sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers. The Relief Society helps women fulfill their responsibilities as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers. Relief Society sisters have always supported one another in efforts to strengthen families, learn practical skills that improve their homes, and make their homes places where the Spirit can dwell.

### Zina D. H. Young was an example of nurturing families

Sister Zina D. H. Young was a loving, nurturing mother, and she taught Relief Society sisters the principles that guided her own efforts at home. She counseled: "If there is one mother present here who does not teach and instruct her children properly, . . . I plead with you to do so. Call your children around you . . . and pray with them. . . . Warn the children of the evils that surround us . . . that they may not become a prey to these evils, but grow up in holiness and in purity before the Lord."<sup>15</sup> She also taught: "Be diligent in all the duties of life, as mothers and wives. . . . Let us be careful to speak with wisdom before our little ones, avoiding fault-finding, . . . and cultivate the higher attributes of our nature, that will tend to elevate, refine and purify the heart. . . . We should take the utmost pains to teach the children of Zion to be honest, virtuous, upright and punctual in all their duties; also to be industrious and keep the Sabbath day holy. . . . Mothers should never speak a word detrimental to the father's best interest before the children, for they are close observers. Sow good seeds in their young and tender minds, and always prefer principle to policy, thus you will lay up treasures in heaven."<sup>16</sup>

"Whenever . . . temptations became most alluring and most tempting to me, the first thought that arose in my soul was this: Remember the love of your mother. Remember how she strove for your welfare. Remember how willing she was to sacrifice her life for your good. Remember what she taught you in your childhood. . . . This feeling toward my mother became a defense, a barrier between me and temptation."

President Joseph F. Smith

*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith (1998), 35*





## Bathsheba W. Smith educated Relief Society sisters about motherhood

When Sister Bathsheba W. Smith served as the fourth Relief Society general president, she saw a need to strengthen families, and so she established mother education lessons for Relief Society sisters. The lessons included counsel on marriage, prenatal care, and child rearing. These lessons supported President Joseph F. Smith's teachings about the Relief Society helping women in their roles at home:

"Wherever there is ignorance or at least a lack of understanding in regard to the family, duties of the family, with regard to obligations that should exist and that do rightfully exist between husband and wife and between parents and children, there this organization exists or is near at hand, and by the natural endowments and inspiration that belongs to the organization they are prepared and ready to impart instruction with reference to those important duties. Where there is a young mother, that has not had the experience that she should have to nurture and nurse her child, or to make her home pleasant and attractive and desirable for herself and her husband, this organization exists, in some part of its organization, to impart instruction to that young mother, and to help her to do her duty and to do it well. And wherever there is lack of experience in administering natural and nourishing and proper food to children, or where there is a necessity of giving proper spiritual instruction and spiritual food to children, there are in the great organizations of the Female Relief Societies of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and organizations of mothers and daughters of Zion, those who are equipped to impart that instruction."<sup>17</sup>

## Women serve and nurture others in many ways

The ability to nurture is not confined to women who have children of their own. Sister Sheri L. Dew observed: "For reasons known to the Lord, some women are required to wait to have children. This delay is not easy for any righteous woman. But the Lord's timetable for each of us does not negate our nature. Some of us, then, must simply find

other ways to mother. And all around us are those who need to be loved and led."<sup>18</sup>

Sisters in the Church have opportunities to nurture when they receive callings as leaders and teachers and when they serve as visiting teachers. Some sisters provide motherly love and influence for children who were not born to them. Single sisters have often been at the forefront of such efforts, blessing the lives of children who need the influence of righteous women. Sometimes this nurturing has continued for days, weeks, and years. Through selfless service and personal faith, women have rescued many children from emotional, spiritual, and physical danger.

## Women can make their homes a center of strength

Since the early days of Relief Society in Nauvoo, Illinois, sisters have gathered to learn about their charitable and practical responsibilities. They have practiced skills to help them increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen their families and make their homes centers of spiritual strength, and help those in need. They have applied principles of provident living and spiritual and temporal self-reliance. They have also increased in sisterhood and unity as they have taught one another and served together. This training has blessed sisters in all circumstances. Sister Bonnie D. Parkin told about how these meetings strengthened her:

"As members of the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is our blessing and our responsibility to nurture and sustain the family unit. Everyone belongs to a family, and every family needs to be strengthened and protected.

"My greatest help in becoming a homemaker came first from my own mother and grandmother and next from the Relief Society sisters in the different wards where we have lived. I learned skills; I saw modeled the joys that come from creating a home where others want to be. . . . Relief Society leaders, make sure that the meetings and the activities you plan will strengthen the homes of all your sisters."<sup>19</sup>



Sister Barbara W. Winder, the eleventh Relief Society general president, reminded women of spiritual blessings that come when they maintain cleanliness and order in their homes: "There is an art to being a homemaker. For ourselves and for our families, it is important that we have a sanctuary—a place of refuge away from the world where we feel comfortable and where, if others come, they, too, can feel comfortable [see D&C 115:6]."<sup>20</sup>

Individually and collectively, Relief Society sisters are examples to each other in the effort to strengthen homes and families. Sister Belle S. Spafford, the ninth Relief Society general president, shared her testimony of Relief Society's divine origin and its role in helping women fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. "I think it has a profound influence for good on the home," she said. "If one has a good mother she has a good home, and if she has a good Relief Society mother, she may be assured wisdom and a good influence will pervade the home."<sup>21</sup>

## Sisters have a responsibility to nurture others

All sisters share the responsibility to nurture, or "mother." Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "Sisters, we, your brethren, cannot do what you were divinely designated to do from before the foundation of the world. We may try, but we cannot ever hope to replicate your unique gifts. There is nothing in this world as personal, as nurturing, or as life changing as the influence of a righteous woman. . . . All women have within their divine nature both the inherent talent and the stewardship to mother."<sup>22</sup>

The word *motherhood* defines women's eternal roles; it describes their nature as nurturers. *Nurture* is a rich word. It means to train, to teach, to educate, to foster development, to promote growth, and to nourish or feed. Women have been given the great privilege and responsibility to nurture in all these senses of the word, and the Relief Society has the responsibility to teach and support women in their divinely ordained, indispensable roles as mothers and nurturers.<sup>23</sup>

Sister Julie B. Beck taught about the role of nurturing: "To nurture means to cultivate, care for, and make grow. Therefore, mothers [should] create a climate for spiritual and temporal growth in their homes. Another word for *nurturing* is *homemaking*. Homemaking includes cooking, washing clothes and dishes, and keeping an orderly home. Home is where women have the most power and influence; therefore, Latter-day Saint women should be the best homemakers in the world. Working beside children in homemaking tasks creates opportunities to teach and model qualities children should emulate. Nurturing mothers are knowledgeable, but all the education women attain will avail them nothing if they do not have the skill to make a home that creates a climate for spiritual growth. . . . Nurturing requires organization, patience, love, and work. Helping growth occur through nurturing is truly a powerful and influential role bestowed on women."<sup>24</sup>

## Relief Society defends the family and motherhood

In addition to strengthening homes from the inside, the Relief Society has provided unyielding defense against influences that attack the family from the outside. President Howard W. Hunter, the fourteenth President of the Church, said:

"It seems to me that there is a great need to rally the women of the Church to stand with and for the Brethren in stemming the tide of evil that surrounds us and in moving forward the work of our Savior. . . .

". . . So we entreat you to minister with your powerful influence for good in strengthening our families, our church, and our communities."<sup>25</sup>

Relief Society leaders have always spoken out against efforts to weaken the traditional family and demean the sacred roles of wife and mother. Sister Amy Brown Lyman, the eighth Relief Society general president, emphasized the need for mothers to be with their children. She served as president during World War II, a time when government and civic leaders encouraged women to work outside the home to support their national economies while their husbands were at war. Some sisters needed to work outside the





home to provide the necessities of life for their families. Although Sister Lyman acknowledged these challenges, she nevertheless encouraged women to do all they could to be at home and teach their children.

Sister Lyman's messages were consistent with the teachings of the First Presidency, who reminded Church members of the "sacred dedication" of motherhood.<sup>26</sup> President Heber J. Grant, the seventh President of the Church, and his counselors, Presidents J. Reuben Clark Jr. and David O. McKay, declared:

"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."<sup>27</sup>

In the decades following World War II, negative influences on families and homes escalated. When President Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth President of the Church, set apart Sister Barbara B. Smith to serve as the tenth Relief Society general president, Sister Smith felt "a profound impression of the responsibility . . . to defend the home and the woman's partnership in that sacred family circle."<sup>28</sup> Throughout her presidency, she defended revealed truths about the divine roles of women and the blessing of eternal families. As she, her counselors, and priesthood leaders diligently studied the social issues of their day, they found that the initiatives promoted by many would not protect women's privileges in their roles as wives and mothers and would weaken families.

A newspaper reporter summarized Sister Smith's repeated message: "'Hold your heads high, you wives, mothers, homemakers. You engender life and enrich it. Don't trade that pervasive force for fleeting, surface trinkets. Cherish it, enlarge it, magnify it. You hold a mighty office.' That's the message of the leader of Mormon women, Barbara B. Smith."<sup>29</sup>

Attacks on the sanctity of motherhood and the family have increased since the days of Sister Smith's presidency. But with faith in God and an understanding of the eternal significance of their responsibilities, Relief Society sisters of all ages continue to uphold and defend truths that strengthen homes and families. They guard the sanctity of the family in many different roles: as mothers and grandmothers, as daughters and sisters, as aunts, and as teachers and leaders in the Church. Whenever a woman strengthens the faith of a child, she contributes to the strength of a family—now and in the future.



Young Relief Society sisters can learn homemaking skills from more experienced sisters.

## Latter-day prophets' teachings about the importance of the family

A father and mother once asked their children what they had liked about a recent general conference. Their 16-year-old daughter said: "I loved it! I loved hearing inspired, intelligent prophets and leaders affirm motherhood." In her innermost feelings, this young woman had always wanted to be a mother, but she had been concerned that motherhood was unpopular and even denigrated by many people in the world. She was comforted when she heard prophets and apostles affirm the goodness of her ideals.<sup>30</sup> The Relief Society's work to strengthen home and family has always been unified with the teachings of latter-day prophets.

President David O. McKay, the ninth President of the Church, often taught that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home."<sup>31</sup>

President Harold B. Lee, the eleventh President of the Church, similarly counseled, "The most



important of the Lord's work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own homes."<sup>32</sup>

Concerned about continuing attacks on the family, President Spencer W. Kimball prophesied and warned:

"Many of the social restraints which in the past have helped to reinforce and to shore up the family are dissolving and disappearing. The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us.

". . . There are those who would define the family in such a nontraditional way that they would define it out of existence. . . .

"We of all people . . . should not be taken in by the specious [deceptive] arguments that the family unit is somehow tied to a particular phase of development a mortal society is going through. We are free to resist those moves which downplay the significance of the family and which play up the significance of selfish individualism. We know the family to be eternal. We know that when things go wrong in the family, things go wrong in every other institution in society."<sup>33</sup>

Along with these stern warnings, latter-day prophets have shared words of hope for faithful parents whose children have wandered from the gospel path. President James E. Faust said: "To those brokenhearted parents who have been righteous, diligent, and prayerful in the teaching of their disobedient children, we say to you, the Good Shepherd is watching over them. God knows and understands your deep sorrow. There is hope."<sup>34</sup>

### President Gordon B. Hinckley taught Relief Society sisters to unite in their defense of the family

President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed his confidence that Latter-day Saint women, strengthened by their association in Relief Society, can help their families withstand attacks on the home. He emphasized that Relief Society sisters can unite in defense of the family:

"It is so tremendously important that the women of the Church stand strong and immovable for that which is correct and proper under the plan of the Lord. I am convinced there is no other organization anywhere to match the Relief Society of this Church. . . . If they will be united and speak with one voice, their strength will be incalculable.

"We call upon the women of the Church to stand together for righteousness. They must begin in their own homes. They can teach it in their classes. They can voice it in their communities.

"Mothers in Zion, your God-given roles are so vital to your own exaltation and to the salvation and exaltation of your family. A child needs a mother more than all the things money can buy. Spending time with your children is the greatest gift of all."

President Ezra Taft Benson

*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson (1988), 515*

"They must be the teachers and the guardians of their daughters. Those daughters must be taught in the Primary and in the classes of the Young Women of the values of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When you save a girl, you save generations. She will grow in strength and righteousness. She will marry in the house of the Lord. She will teach her children the ways of truth. They will walk in her paths and will similarly teach their children. Wonderful grandmothers will be there to lend encouragement."<sup>35</sup>

### Home and family offer us "glimpses of heaven"

A man once asked President Spencer W. Kimball, "Have you ever been to heaven?" In response to this question, President Kimball said that he had glimpsed heaven that very day when he had performed the sealing of a couple, one of whom was the last of 8 siblings to receive this sacred ordinance. "The pure in heart were there," President Kimball said. "Heaven was there." He told of a time when he glimpsed heaven at the home of



a stake president. The home was small, but the family was large. The children worked together to set the table, and a young child offered a heartfelt prayer before supper. President Kimball said that he had glimpsed heaven when he had spoken with a couple who had never been able to have children of their own but who had "filled their home" with 18 orphans. He shared other experiences when he had glimpsed heaven in the lives of faithful Latter-day Saints who expressed their testimonies in their words and their actions. "Heaven is a place," President Kimball taught, "but also a condition; it is home and family. It is understanding and kindness. It is interdependence and selfless activity. It is quiet, sane living; personal sacrifice, genuine hospitality, wholesome concern for others. It is living the commandments of God without ostentation or hypocrisy. It is selflessness. It is all about us. We need only to be able to recognize it as we find it and enjoy it. Yes, my dear brother, I've had many glimpses of heaven."<sup>36</sup>



Righteous women can make their homes havens where the Spirit can dwell.

### To be a righteous woman in this age is a glorious thing

Throughout the world, Relief Society sisters and their families have drawn near to heaven by the way they have lived.

A sister in the United States took care of her dying mother for 3 years. Less than a year later, her daughter developed a rare physical disorder. This dedicated mother took care of her daughter every day for 10 years until the young woman passed away at the age of 17.

A single mother in Tonga had a simple home where she nurtured several children. Her greatest desire was that her sons and daughters serve the Lord and improve their lives. Consistent with these priorities, she helped her children establish gospel patterns in their lives. Under her leadership, they got a good education. They prayed, studied the scriptures, worked, and worshipped together.

A sister in the United States had 8 children under the age of 14. Every day was a physical, mental, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional challenge for her, but she took care of the right things. She sustained her husband in his Church service and in his efforts to support their family. Together, they prayed for each child and pondered ways to help each one advance with personal responsibilities and goals. In her home, the sheer amount of cooking, managing, thinking, and praying was tremendous for this sister. In addition, she accepted visiting teaching responsibilities and took care of sisters in her ward who needed to be lifted up. She prayed over them, worried about them, visited them, and checked on them numerous times each month.

A faithful family in Mexico lived in a busy, noisy city in a home behind a large wall and a metal gate. On the inside of the wall, the mother painted a beautiful garden, with trees, flowers, and a fountain. Inside the home, the family kept books on shelves and maintained places to gather, study, and play together.

A sister in Ghana maintained her family's farm. Outside the rail fence, she cultivated yarrow plants. Inside the fence, she kept goats in pens. She also kept palm nuts that she boiled to make palm oil to sell in the local markets. Everything in her tidy enclosure demonstrated her love for her family. She raked, cleaned, and swept her yard. Under a mango tree, the family had a homemade bench where they sat for family home evening and other family gatherings.

A single sister with physical disabilities lived on the 80th floor of a high-rise in Hong Kong. She lived alone and was the only member of the Church in her family, but she created a home that was a haven where she and visitors could feel the influence of the Spirit. On a little shelf, she kept





her scriptures, her Relief Society manuals, and her hymnbook. She sought out her ancestors and traveled to the temple to perform ordinances for them.

A sister in India helped establish a branch in her city. Her husband was the branch president, and she was the Relief Society president for a group of about 20 members. They reared three faithful daughters, with the principles of the gospel safeguarding them in their holy home.

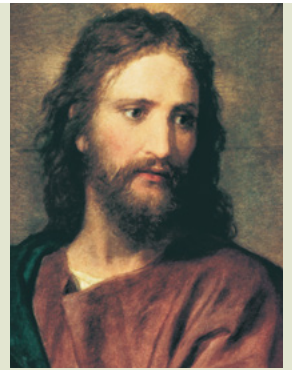
A mother in Brazil lived in a home that was made of red brick in a yard of red soil surrounded by a wall of red brick. The music of Primary songs filled the air, and pictures cut out from the *Liahona* of temples, prophets of God, and the Savior covered the walls. She and her husband sacrificed to be sealed in the temple so their children could be born in the covenant. Her constant prayer was that the Lord would help her and give her strength and inspiration sufficient to bring up her children in the light, truth, and strength of the gospel so that they would be able to make and keep the covenants she and her husband had sacrificed to provide for them.

These sisters, representative of many more, are truly, as President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "guardians of the hearth."<sup>37</sup> They are worthy of these words spoken by President Spencer W. Kimball:

"To be a righteous woman is a glorious thing in any age. 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. She has been placed here to help to enrich, to protect, and to guard the home—which is society's basic and most noble institution. Other institutions in society may falter and even fail, but the righteous woman can help to save the home, which may be the last and only sanctuary some mortals know in the midst of storm and strife."<sup>38</sup>

## Do It Yourself

Family is very important to God's plan for us. Make a list of your positive qualities that can help strengthen your family now and in the future.



### "May you be strengthened for the challenges of the day"

On that historic night when President Hinckley read the proclamation on the family, he concluded his address with a blessing upon the women of the Church:

"May the Lord bless you, my beloved sisters. . . . May you be strengthened for the challenges of the day. May you be endowed with wisdom beyond your own in dealing with the problems you constantly face. May your prayers and your pleadings be answered with blessings upon your heads and upon the heads of your loved ones. We leave with you our love and our blessing, that your lives may be filled with peace and gladness. It can be so. Many of you can testify that it has been so. The Lord bless you now and through the years to come, I humbly pray."<sup>39</sup>

[Note: Subheadings were added or altered in this chapter. Scripture references have been moved from the endnotes into the text of the chapter.]



## Endnotes

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Strong against the Wives of the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," pages 166–67 in this book.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in "Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 5.
4. Barbara Thompson, "I Will Strengthen Thee; I Will Help Thee," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 117.
5. Bonnie D. Parkin, "Parents Have a Sacred Duty," *Ensign*, June 2006, 93.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Strong against the Wives of the World," 101.
7. James E. Faust, "The Grand Key-Words for the Relief Society," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 94; capitalization standardized.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Strong against the Wives of the World," 100.
9. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," page 166 in this book.
10. Julie B. Beck, "Teaching the Doctrine of the Family," *Ensign*, Mar. 2011, 12.
11. See Genesis 27–28; see also Julie B. Beck, "Teaching the Doctrine of the Family," 16.
12. Eliza R. Snow, "An Address," *Woman's Exponent*, Sept. 15, 1873, 63.
13. Zina D. H. Young, in "First General Conference of the Relief Society," *Woman's Exponent*, Apr. 15, 1889, 172.
14. Joseph F. Smith, in *Deseret Weekly*, Jan. 9, 1892, 71; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 31–32.
15. Zina D. H. Young, in "Relief Society Jubilee," *Woman's Exponent*, Apr. 1, 1892, 140.
16. Zina D. H. Young, in "First General Conference of the Relief Society," 172.
17. Joseph F. Smith, in Minutes of Relief Society General Board, Mar. 17, 1914, 50–51; as quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 186.
18. Sheri L. Dew, "Are We Not All Mothers?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 97.
19. Bonnie D. Parkin, "Parents Have a Sacred Duty," 97.
20. Barbara W. Winder, in "Enriching and Protecting the Home," *Ensign*, Mar. 1986, 20.
21. Belle S. Spafford, interview by Jill Mulvay [Derr], Mar. 8, 1976, transcript, Church History Library, 238.
22. M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Apr. 2010, 17; or *Ensign*, May 2010, 18.
23. See Sheri L. Dew, "Are We Not All Mothers?" 96–98.
24. Julie B. Beck, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 81; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 76–77.
25. Howard W. Hunter, "To the Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 96.
26. Message from the First Presidency, in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, 12; read by J. Reuben Clark Jr.
27. Message from the First Presidency, in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, 12–13; read by J. Reuben Clark Jr.
28. Barbara B. Smith, *A Fruitful Season* (1988), 55.
29. George W. Cornell, "Homemakers Get a Boost," *Fresno [California] Bee*, Apr. 5, 1978, C-5; quoted in Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (1992), 361.
30. See Susan W. Tanner, "Strengthening Future Mothers," *Ensign*, June 2005, 20.
31. David O. McKay quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116.
32. Harold B. Lee, "Be Loyal to the Royal within You," in *Speeches of the Year: BYU Devotional and Ten-Stake Fireside Addresses 1973* (1974), 91; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 134.
33. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 3–4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 4.
34. James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 70; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 68.



35. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Standing Strong and Immovable," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.
36. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1971, 152–56; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 36–39.
37. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Strong against the Wives of the World," 101.
38. Spencer W. Kimball, "Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters," *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 103.
39. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Strong against the Wives of the World," 101.







# THE FAMILY

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## A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

**WE**, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

**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.

**IN THE PREMORTAL REALM**, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

**THE FIRST COMMANDMENT** that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

**WE DECLARE** the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

**HUSBAND AND WIFE** have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord"

(Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

**THE FAMILY** is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

**WE WARN** that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

**WE CALL UPON** responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

*This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.*



# "Guardians of the Hearth": Establishing, Nurturing, and Defending the Family

## RESPONSE FORM

1. Why did President Gordon B. Hinckley present the "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" at a general Relief Society meeting?

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2. What does it mean to nurture others?

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3. What are some ways you can strive right now to nurture your children, nieces and nephews, grandchildren, or other people you love and care about?

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4. How can you prepare to be a stronger mother, aunt, grandmother, and friend now and after you are released?

Handwriting lines for question 4.

5. What are some of the challenges of this time? How can you help to protect those you love—your children, nieces and nephews, grandchildren, and others you care about—from these challenges?

Handwriting lines for question 5.

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

Handwriting lines for question 6.

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

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

Correctional Services
780 West 800 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84104-1427
1-801-240-2644