



WOMEN'S TOPICS FOR  
INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

# "Live Up to Your Privilege"





## 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  
*"Live Up to Your Privilege"*

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THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



# "Live Up to Your Privilege"

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

In one of the first meetings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, Joseph Smith admonished the sisters to "live up to [their] privilege."<sup>1</sup> With that encouragement as a foundation, sisters in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been taught to live up to their divine potential by fulfilling God's purposes for them. As they come to understand who they really are—God's daughters, with an innate capacity to love and nurture—they reach their potential as holy women. With charity in their hearts, they fulfill the purposes of Relief Society: to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and seek out and help those in need.

Established as an integral part of the Restoration, the Relief Society helps Latter-day Saint women live up to their privilege. Through this organization, sisters receive a vision and assurance of their identity as daughters of God. They also receive opportunities to serve and the direction and authority they need to fulfill those responsibilities.

## God has a glorious destiny in store for His faithful daughters

Joseph Smith taught Relief Society sisters of their nobility as daughters of God, helping them understand that God loved them and had grand purposes for them to fulfill. Women in the Church play essential roles in Heavenly Father's plan of salvation—just as important as the roles played by men who hold the priesthood. The Lord has endowed women with an innate desire to serve and bless others, and He has entrusted them with a sacred responsibility to use their gifts to help save His children.

Women sometimes forget their true nobility and give in to the diversions and temptations of the world. Concerned about this trend, Sister Mary

Ellen Smoot, the thirteenth Relief Society general president, and her counselors, Sisters Virginia U. Jensen and Sheri L. Dew, felt a need to help the women of the Church remember their identity. In a general Relief Society meeting, they expressed what it means to be daughters of God:

"We are beloved spirit daughters of God, and our lives have meaning, purpose, and direction. As a worldwide sisterhood, we are united in our devotion to Jesus Christ, our Savior and Exemplar. We are women of faith, virtue, vision, and charity who:

"Increase our testimonies of Jesus Christ through prayer and scripture study.

"Seek spiritual strength by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

"Dedicate ourselves to strengthening marriages, families, and homes.

"Find nobility in motherhood and joy in womanhood.

"Delight in service and good works.

"Love life and learning.

"Stand for truth and righteousness.

You are now placed in a situation where you can act according to those sympathies which God has planted in your bosoms. If you live up to these principles how great and glorious!—if you live up to your privilege, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates. . . . If you will be pure, nothing can hinder.

The Prophet Joseph Smith



"Sustain the priesthood as the authority of God on earth.

"Rejoice in the blessings of the temple, understand our divine destiny, and strive for exaltation."<sup>2</sup>



As women live up to their potential as daughters of God, they prepare themselves for the blessings of eternal life. *Turning Hearts to the Family*, by Anne Marie Oborn. © 1997 Anne Marie Oborn.

Priesthood leaders have also reminded women of their divine nature and sacred responsibilities. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "We believe in and are counting on your goodness and your strength, your propensity for virtue and valor, your kindness and courage, your strength and resilience. We believe in your mission as women of God. . . . We believe that the Church simply will not accomplish what it must without your faith and faithfulness, your innate tendency to put the well-being of others ahead of your own, and your spiritual strength and tenacity. And we believe that God's plan is for you to become queens and to receive the highest blessings any woman can receive in time or eternity."<sup>3</sup>

As women live up to their privilege and potential as daughters of God, they prepare themselves for the blessing of eternal life. This is the glorious destiny God has in store for His faithful daughters.

## True charity is a legacy of Relief Society

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "It is natural for females to have feelings of charity." With the establishment of Relief Society, he told the sisters, "You are now placed in a situation where you can act according to those sympathies which God has planted in your bosoms."<sup>4</sup> For true charity to blossom in their hearts, women must combine their innate compassion with faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. President Henry B. Eyring, a counselor in the First Presidency, explained that this true charity is the legacy of Relief Society:

"I will speak to you . . . of the great legacy those who went before you in the Relief Society have passed on to you. The part . . . which seems to me most important and persistent is that charity is at the heart of the society and is to come into the heart, to be part of the very nature, of every member. Charity meant to them far more than a feeling of benevolence. Charity is born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and is an effect of His Atonement working in the hearts of the members. . . .

"This society is composed of women whose feelings of charity spring from hearts changed by qualifying for and by keeping covenants offered only in the Lord's true Church. Their feelings of charity come from Him through His Atonement [see Moroni 7:45–47]. Their acts of charity are guided by His example—and come out of gratitude for His infinite gift of mercy—and by the Holy Spirit, which He sends to accompany His servants on their missions of mercy."<sup>5</sup>

"I have been quoted as saying, 'Do the best you can.' But I want to emphasize that it be the very best. We are too prone to be satisfied with mediocre performance. We are capable of doing so much better."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

*Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting,  
Jan. 10, 2004, 2*



This legacy of charity began with the sisters in Nauvoo, who engaged in organized charitable works and received temple covenants. It continued in Winter Quarters and along the arduous trail to the Salt Lake Valley. It sustained Latter-day Saint women as they settled frontier communities, endured political persecution and world wars, and maintained hope during economic depression. It has inspired loving-kindness at home and out-reach efforts worldwide. It has motivated Relief Society sisters as they have served in hospitals and as they have helped with adoptions, wheat storage, humanitarian aid, and welfare. The pure love of Christ continues to motivate Relief Society sisters today as they gather to teach and serve one another and as they strengthen and watch over each other one by one.

Every Latter-day Saint woman becomes a part of this legacy of love and has the responsibility and privilege to share this heritage with others.

One family's history illustrates how the Relief Society heritage has been passed from mother to daughter for generations. Each daughter has embraced the Relief Society's motto, "Charity never faileth."

### One family passed Relief Society's legacy of charity from mother to daughters to granddaughters

The legacy began with Elizabeth Haven Barlow, who joined the Church in 1837. Elizabeth became a member of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo on April 28, 1842, and she heard the Prophet Joseph Smith teach the foundational principles of the organization. These teachings sustained her through a life that included being a victim of mobbings and persecution, bearing a child during the journey to the Salt Lake Valley, and caring for a young family while her husband was on a mission. She served as a Relief Society president in Bountiful, Utah, from 1857 to 1888, three years prior to her death at age 81.

The story continued with her daughter Pamela Barlow Thompson. Pamela and her husband were called to settle Panaca, Nevada, where she became a Relief Society president. She taught the sisters homemaking skills, including how to use

a new mechanical marvel: the sewing machine. When they were living in Nevada, her husband was killed. She and her large family then moved to Bountiful, Utah, where she was again called to serve in a Relief Society presidency.

Pamela passed this legacy to her daughter Theresa Thompson Call. Soon after Theresa was married, she and her husband moved to Mexico. During most of her life, she served simultaneously as the Relief Society president and a counselor in the Primary presidency. She was well known for her compassionate service, taking meals to the needy. She made a practice of taking cakes to her elderly neighbors on their birthdays. On one such occasion, she forgot a neighbor's birthday until after supper. Committed to the principle that "charity never faileth," she rekindled the fire in the stove and stirred up a cake. When she arrived at the door late that night, the sister burst into tears and said, "I have been waiting all day for you, and I had just about decided that you had forgotten me this time."

Theresa's daughter Athelia Call Sears also loved Relief Society. She rushed to get her ironing done every Tuesday morning so she could attend Relief Society meeting on Tuesday afternoon. In her 70s, she was called to serve as a ward Relief Society president. At a time when wards were required to raise funds for equipment and activities, she led her Relief Society sisters in raising enough money to buy kitchen equipment for the meetinghouse, with an additional \$1,000 for the bishop to use for other needs in the ward.

Athelia Sears Tanner, a daughter of Sister Sears, was called as a young mother to be a ward Relief Society president. Much of her compassionate service consisted of tending for and taking meals to mothers of new babies. A natural teacher with a strong testimony of Jesus Christ, she nurtured her 13 children and also served others and saved souls in various capacities in Relief Society throughout her life.

The legacy of charity has continued in this family. All of Sister Tanner's daughters have served faithfully in Relief Society, and her granddaughters have followed their mothers' examples.<sup>6</sup>



"The history of Relief Society is recorded in words and numbers, but the heritage is passed heart to heart" (Henry B. Eyring). Photograph © 2000 Steve Bunderson.

Charitable service is the spiritual legacy of every member of Relief Society. As President Eyring explained: "You pass the heritage along as you help others receive the gift of charity in their hearts. They will then be able to pass it to others. The history of Relief Society is recorded in words and numbers, but the heritage is passed heart to heart."<sup>7</sup>

### Every generation is blessed by faithful, charitable women

After recounting many examples of people with great faith, the Apostle Paul said, "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1–2).

The women of the Church are surrounded by a great host of witnesses, including "our glorious Mother Eve" and "many of her faithful daughters who [have] lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God" (D&C 138:39). Faithful daughters of God live up to their privilege by following in the footsteps of these witnesses, laying aside the problems and temptations that beset them and running the race that the Lord sets before them.

Every generation has noble, charitable, faithful, holy women. Although few of these women will have their names recorded in history, their Heavenly Father knows them well. And this, as Eliza R. Snow said, is all that ultimately matters:

"There are many of the sisters whose labors are not known beyond their own dwellings and perhaps not appreciated there, but what difference does that make? If your labors are acceptable to God, however simple the duties, if faithfully performed, you should never be discouraged."<sup>8</sup>

### Relief Society sisters supported Lynne when her stepfather passed away

The following story is one of the countless examples of the influence of faithful Relief Society sisters. In this case, a handful of women touched the life of a young adult named Lynne. Because Lynne saw these sisters serve, she was determined to do the same when she became a Relief Society sister.

When Lynne was in her late teens, she and her mother learned that her stepfather had been seriously injured in a distant city. They quickly got on an airplane to visit him, but he died before they could reach him. Lynne later told about what happened upon their return home:

"As my mother and I, exhausted and heartsick, walked down the steps from the plane, [a] man and woman standing on the airstrip walked over and put their arms around us. It was the branch president and the Relief Society president. . . .

"Those days were confusing as we struggled to deal with the fact that [my stepfather] was dead. . . . But there was always a sister there, waiting quietly in the background—to take messages, to answer the door, to hold our hands as we made phone calls to our families and friends. They were there to help us pack, to deal with all that had to be done.

"Through it all, I developed such a sense of gratitude that I couldn't imagine how I could repay those dear sisters. I desperately tried to think of a way, but imagination gave way to exhaustion."



## Years later, Lynne found her own opportunities to serve others through Relief Society

Several years later, when Lynne was married with three small children, she was called to serve in a Relief Society presidency. At times she wondered if she could meet the demands of her calling. But then she remembered the service she had received after her stepfather died. "Now," she thought to herself, "it's my turn." She shared the following experiences:

"A woman in the ward had lost her fourteen-year-old daughter. The mother asked me to buy a beautiful gown and to dress her daughter's body in it in preparation for the burial. I was able to do it—and found it a very tender experience. It was my turn to serve, as [other sisters] had served me.

"An elderly woman in the ward who lived alone overdosed on her medications and was in a helpless condition for three days. The other counselor and I found her still alive in her apartment and cleaned her up before the ambulance arrived. We then stayed to scrub the apartment—walls and floors—with disinfectant. My turn again.

"A young mother in the ward, one of my friends, suddenly lost her only child, a beautiful three-year-old daughter, to an infection that took her life before the doctors were even aware of how serious her illness was. The other counselor and I went to the house as soon as we heard of little Robin's death. As we approached the screened patio door, we heard the father (who was not a member of the Church) sobbing as he talked long distance to his mother. Looking up, he saw us and, still sobbing, spoke into the phone: 'It will be all right, Mother. The Mormon women are here.' My turn once more."

Lynne later commented that when people asked her what she thought of Relief Society, she told them about her experiences receiving and giving service. She said: "That's how I feel about Relief Society way down deep. And why."<sup>9</sup>

All over the world, Latter-day Saint women feel the same way about Relief Society, "way down deep." Like Lynne, they have benefited from Relief Society service, and they know it is now their turn

to serve with charity and faith. They give this service in different capacities—as daughters, wives, mothers, sisters, aunts, visiting teachers, Relief Society leaders, neighbors, and friends. Some of their service comes in response to assignments from Church leaders, and some of their service comes in response to quiet promptings from the Holy Ghost. Seeing that they are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," they are ready to "run with patience the race that is set before [them]."



The pure love of Christ continues to inspire Relief Society sisters as they teach and serve one another.

## Latter-day Saint women can "lead the world . . . in everything that is praise-worthy"

President Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Church, urged Latter-day Saint women to "lead the world and to lead especially the women of the world, in everything that is praise-worthy, everything that is God-like, everything that is uplifting and that is purifying." He said, "You are called by the voice of the Prophet of God to do it, to be uppermost, to be the greatest and the best, the purest and the most devoted to the right."<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the history of the Lord's restored Church, female disciples of Christ have lived up to this standard. Like Esther, they have been faithful and courageous in the face of difficult challenges. They have found purpose in their lives, as Esther did when her cousin Mordecai asked her, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). Like Nehemiah in the Old Testament, they have not been diverted from their sacred responsibilities. When Nehemiah's enemies tried to tempt him



away from his duty to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, he replied, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:3). His enemies continued to tempt him, but he stayed strong and true to his important work. The world has tried to persuade the women of the Church to abandon their God-given missions, but faithful Relief Society sisters have not "come down."

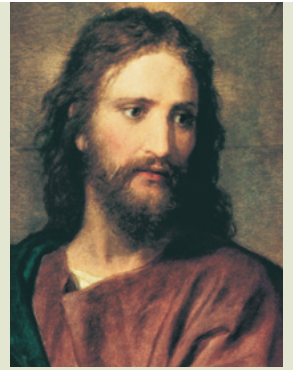
The charge to lead out in everything that is praiseworthy, Godlike, uplifting, and purifying is a demanding one. It always has been. But individual Relief Society sisters are not alone in accepting this charge. They are part of a great organization, founded by priesthood authority and strengthened by the teachings and declarations of prophets. They are beloved daughters of God with sacred responsibilities. They are covenant people of the Lamb, "armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory" (1 Nephi 14:14). As they unite with other faithful Saints and learn from the examples of those who have gone before, they can prevail over mortal challenges. They can help build the kingdom of God throughout the world and in their homes. They can say, "Now it is our turn—our turn to serve and write a chapter on the pages of Relief Society's history." With an assurance of Heavenly Father's love for them and a testimony of the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, they can rise above ordinary thoughts and ambitions and be part of "something extraordinary."<sup>11</sup>

The Lord's promises are sure as sisters follow the counsel He gave to the first Relief Society president: "Verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom. . . . Lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better. . . . Cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made" (D&C 25:1, 10, 13). When the Prophet Joseph Smith told Relief Society sisters to "live up to [their] privilege," he combined that exhortation with a promise: "The angels cannot be restrained from being your associates. . . . If you will be pure, nothing can hinder."<sup>12</sup>

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

## Do It Yourself

On a separate sheet of paper, write a poem or draw a picture of what you imagine it would feel like to have angels near you, helping you through your challenges.



## Endnotes

1. Joseph Smith, in Relief Society Minute Book, Nauvoo, Illinois, Apr. 28, 1842, Church History Library, 38; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization standardized as needed in all excerpts from this minute book.
2. Mary Ellen Smoot, "Rejoice, Daughters of Zion," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 92–93.
3. M. Russell Ballard, "Women of Righteousness," *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 69.
4. Joseph Smith, in Relief Society Minute Book, Nauvoo, Illinois, Apr. 28, 1842, 38.
5. Henry B. Eyring, "The Enduring Legacy of Relief Society," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 121.
6. See Athelia T. Woolley, with Athelia S. Tanner, "Our Five-Generation Love Affair with Relief Society," *Ensign*, June 1978, 37–39.
7. Henry B. Eyring, "The Enduring Legacy of Relief Society," 124–25.
8. Eliza R. Snow, "Speech by E. R. Snow," *Woman's Exponent*, May 1, 1891, 167; capitalization standardized.
9. See Lynne Christy, "Now It's My Turn," *Ensign*, Mar. 1992, 25–27.
10. Joseph F. Smith, in Minutes of the General Board of Relief Society, Mar. 17, 1914, Church History Library, 54–55.
11. Emma Smith, in Relief Society Minute Book, Nauvoo, Illinois, Mar. 17, 1842, 12.
12. Joseph Smith, in Relief Society Minute Book, Nauvoo, Illinois, Apr. 28, 1842, 38–39.





# "Live Up to Your Privilege"

## RESPONSE FORM

1. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught women to "live up to [their] privilege." How does this counsel apply to you?

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2. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught of the nobility of the daughters of God. How can this concept uplift you?

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3. Making lasting changes in our lives is like climbing a mountain: it is a long and difficult journey, but if we are persistent and refuse to give up, we can eventually reach the summit. How can you begin climbing the mountain to become a great, productive member of society and of the kingdom of God?

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4. President Joseph F. Smith taught that women in the Church should lead out in seeking everything praiseworthy and godlike [see Articles of Faith 1:13]. What can you do in your current situation to start seeking these things?

Handwriting lines for question 4.

5. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that if women live up to their privilege, "The angels cannot be restrained from being your associates. . . . If you will be pure, nothing can hinder." How can you develop purity in your life?

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 #: \_\_\_\_\_

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