

Heaven has assigned to the mothers, who are the teachers and workers and standard-setters in the homes of the Latter-day Saints. The mothers in those homes give the impressionable sons and daughters of God their earliest and most formative orientation for their mortal journey toward eternal life.

Using the priesthood to bless others

Brethren, we know that the priesthood is the power of God delegated to men to act for the blessing and salvation of all mankind. While we sometimes refer to priesthood holders as "the priesthood," we must never forget that the priesthood is not owned by or embodied in those who hold it. It is held in a sacred trust to be used for the benefit of men, women, and children alike. Elder John A. Widtsoe said, "Men have no greater claim than women upon the blessings that issue from the Priesthood and accompany its possession" (*Priesthood and Church Government* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 83). For example, our young women should have just as many opportunities for blessings from priesthood leaders as our young men.

Unity of priesthood and auxiliaries

Some leaders at various levels of the Church have neglected to apply these basic principles. Some have failed to have the regular consultation with auxiliary leaders that is specified in our Church handbooks of instruction. President Spencer W. Kimball taught the governing principle to the priesthood leaders of the Church when he said: "Our sisters do not wish to be indulged or to be treated condescendingly; they desire to be respected and revered as our sisters and our equals. I mention all these things, my brethren, not because the doctrines or the teachings of the Church regarding women are in any doubt, but because in some

situations our behavior is of doubtful quality" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 49).

Priesthood leaders are directed to work in close harmony and partnership with the leaders of our auxiliaries: "As auxiliary leaders work with priesthood leaders to accomplish the mission of the Church, the Lord's earthly kingdom will prosper and individual lives will be blessed" (*Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership Handbook* [1990], p. 2).

Only by unity can we follow the way of the Lord, who said, "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27).

Marriage: a common objective

One of the great functions of Relief Society is to provide sisterhood for women, just as priesthood quorums provide brotherhood for men. But all should remember that neither sisterhood nor brotherhood is an end in itself. Each is a means of individual spiritual growth and cooperative service. The ultimate and highest expression of womanhood and manhood is in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. Only this relationship culminates in exaltation. As the Apostle Paul taught, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). Thus, the common objective of brotherhood in our priesthood quorums and sisterhood in our Relief Societies is to bring men and women together in the sacred marriage and family relationships that lead toward eternal life, "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).

We give thanks for the Savior, who made this great goal attainable, for His priesthood authority that administers the essential ordinances, and for the great men and women whose lives are an inspiring legacy of godly service. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.