

Priesthood: “A Sacred Trust to Be Used for the Benefit of Men, Women, and Children”

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My dear sisters, it is a privilege to be with you again this year. I would like to begin by sharing my testimony of the Savior. I know that He lives! I know that He stands at the head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I know that He and our Heavenly Father are always aware of each of us. I love the beginning of section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior.

Great is his wisdom, marvelous are his ways, and the extent of his doings none can find out.

His purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand.

From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail,

For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me. and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.”¹

To me, this says it all! What a promise!

Sisters, I pray that the Spirit might teach us all something that we have prayed and hoped for.

Let’s watch a segment of the recent worldwide leadership training. This segment is titled “Sustaining Each Other in the Home.” Watch for principles that might be helpful in your life. [video clip]²

I would like to share the experience of sister who wrote me a letter about eight months ago about challenges in her family and asked for advice.

I feel prompted to share this story because the sister, I will call Kate, is in a situation that may be familiar to us or to those we love and the principles she learned from her experience may bless all of us. Kate has been married about 15 years and has 3 children. She expressed frustration that her husband had not been leading out in his priesthood duties in the home. She longed for a Sunday without sports on TV, computer games, and other distractions. In order to make family home evening happen, she had to do all the planning, conducting and teaching. Temple trips as a couple seldom happened. In her letter, Kate pled for help, explaining that she had counseled with her bishop, prayed, and gone to the temple for years over this issue and had even received professional counseling. She mentioned that she was not completely innocent herself in all of this—that she often got frustrated and said things that she regretted, then tried to repent and pray for strength. She felt tired and concerned about her husband, who was spiritually stagnant and not progressing.

If you had been in my shoes, how would you have responded to Kate? How do you think the Savior would respond?

I spent time praying for guidance, counseled with other leaders, searched the scriptures, and prayed for the guidance of the Holy Ghost to know what to say. In my reply, I complimented Kate on her righteous desires and efforts. She had mentioned in her letter that her husband was a good man, so that was a great starting point. I encouraged her to write down all the great traits of her husband and to try to compliment him on every possible positive action and characteristic; to try not to think about the things he didn't do but to concentrate on every good thing and thank him for each effort he made to help with anything. I urged her to concentrate on how she might improve herself in the process.

I have often heard it said that marriage is a 50-50 proposition. Well—that is wrong! Marriage is a 100-100 proposition! We must be committed to giving 100 percent whether our spouse does or not, and we can't keep score.

In my response to Kate, I testified that as she continued to make the Lord her partner in her efforts, applied the Atonement and forgiveness in her life, and cast her burdens upon the Savior, that He would help her to ennoble and bless the lives of her husband and children.

About six months later, I received another letter from Kate, telling me that soon after she received my letter, she had had emergency surgery. She was overwhelmed with emotion and stress when she returned home from the hospital. She very much wanted her willing mother to fly out to take care of her and the children, but as she prayed, she felt that having her husband take care of her, the children, and the home could be a good opportunity to show her trust in him and his abilities. She told me how difficult it was not to control how the children were cared for and the house was managed. She said, "At times I slipped and forgot my role as my husband's supporter, instead of his critic. Over and over again, I was blessed to utilize the power of the Atonement to try again and ask for forgiveness from my Heavenly Father and my husband."

She went on to share, “Over the last few months, I have seen changes in him. Nothing drastic, but subtle changes; I see him trying harder to love and support me in my role; I see him engaging more in spiritual experiences with our children and with me, and it is remarkable. The biggest changes have been in me, my attitude, my desire to love and uplift my husband, and my desire to please my Heavenly Father. I am looking forward to the future now and to experiencing more joys and challenges together. The power of daily expressions of love and devotion to my husband has brought me closer to the Savior as well, as I strive to obtain pure charity for my eternal companion.”

Not everyone will have the same struggles or the same successes as Kate, but I know that miracles can occur daily as we pray to have “the pure love of Christ”³ in our hearts—to forgive, encourage, and support each other rather than criticize or demean.

Unfortunately things don’t always work out perfectly. This past week I visited with a friend—a very dear and righteous person. She has spent the last 20 years trying to live as righteously as she can—putting forth every effort to love and cherish her husband. Each time things went wrong in her marriage, she felt that perhaps she was to blame—so she would try harder to be more faithful and devoted to her husband and the Lord, exercising great faith that her marriage would improve. In spite of 20 years of her pleading with the Lord, keeping her covenants with exactness, and trying to love her husband with all of her heart, her marriage has ended in divorce. I know that there are those of you in the audience today who ache and sorrow because, despite your consecrated efforts, life has not worked out the way that you hoped. I testify that the Lord knows your heart and loves you.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy stated: “There are those whose marriages are not as happy as they would wish, as well as those who have never married, are divorced, are single parents, or for various reasons are not in a position to marry. These circumstances can be full of challenge and heartbreak, but they need not be eternal. . . . Keep the commandments, and trust the Lord and His perfect love for you. One day every promised blessing concerning marriage will be yours.”⁴

Last year I went with a stake president and stake Relief Society president to visit the home of a middle-aged couple. The wife had not been to Church for about a year. She was upset with her life and with the Lord because of the choices her older children had made; she wasn’t pleased with her husband either. Without her support, her husband’s Church attendance had started to drop off, despite having a calling.

As we visited with this couple and discussed their challenges, the stake president asked the woman how long it had been since she had received a priesthood blessing. She thought for a few moments and relayed that it had been at least a year. He asked her if she would like a priesthood blessing. She was hesitant at first but reluctantly accepted. The stake president then wisely asked who she would like to give the blessing.

She looked at the stake president, then turned to her husband and said, somewhat indignantly, “You can do it!” With a few reminders from the stake president, this husband gave his wife a

beautiful and inspired blessing. In the blessing, he was prompted to encourage her to make herself worthy to return to the temple, and he promised her that through faithfully attending the temple and keeping her covenants, her burdens would be made lighter. An overwhelming feeling came over each of us as we watched this couple embrace and hold each other as they wept together. I will never forget this experience or what I felt. And I came away full of gratitude for the Lord's plan for His sons and daughters and the blessings than can come to each of us as we make and honor priesthood ordinances and covenants.

In the 2006 worldwide leadership training, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve said: [video clip]

“After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said it was “not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18; Moses 3:18), and Eve became Adam’s companion and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females were needed to implement the plan of happiness. Alone, neither the man nor the woman could fulfill the purposes of his or her creation.

“By divine design, men and women are intended to progress together toward perfection and a fulness of glory. Because of their distinctive temperaments and capacities, males and females each bring to a marriage relationship unique perspectives and experiences. The man and the woman contribute differently, but equally, to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way. The man completes and perfects the woman and the woman completes and perfects the man as they learn from and mutually strengthen and bless each other. ‘Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord’ (1 Corinthians 11:11; italics added).”⁵

I testify that women and men who righteously make and keep sacred priesthood ordinances and covenants will inherit “all that [the] Father hath.”⁶ This is promised to every faithful man and woman, single or married, for we know that every faithful man or woman, single or married, will not be denied any of our Father’s greatest blessings. God, our Heavenly Father, and our Savior, Jesus Christ, have given us all that is needed to receive the highest degree of the celestial kingdom and dwell with Them and our loved ones in power and glory forever and ever.⁷

Do you remember President Monson’s closing address in the past general conference? He pleaded, “I urge you to study the messages further when they are printed in coming issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines.”⁸ I testify that the most important instruction that we can receive today is the counsel from the 15 men that we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators! These men are watchmen on the tower. They see the enemy afar off.⁹ They will tell us all we need to know and do to be worthy to return to the presence of our Father in Heaven. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ Doctrine and Covenants 76:1–5.

² “Bringing Up Children in Light and Truth,” [lds.org/training/wwlt/2013/bringing-up-children-in-light-and-truth/sustaining-each-other-in-the-home](https://www.lds.org/training/wwlt/2013/bringing-up-children-in-light-and-truth/sustaining-each-other-in-the-home). In this segment, Elaine S. Dalton quotes *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 2.3.

³ Moroni 7:47.

⁴ L. Whitney Clayton, “Marriage: Watch and Learn,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 85.

⁵ David A. Bednar, “Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan,” *Ensign*, June 2006, 84.

⁶ Doctrine and Covenants 84:38; italics added.

⁷ See Doctrine and Covenants 76:62.

⁸ Thomas S. Monson, “Until We Meet Again,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 113.

⁹ See Doctrine and Covenants 101: 54.