

ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Women in the Gospel

By Elder Randy D. Funk

Asia Area President

A well-regarded American author and historian wrote the following about early Mormon pioneers: “That I do not accept the faith that possessed them does not mean I doubt their frequent devotion and heroism in its service. Especially their women. Their women were incredible.”¹

The women of this Church are truly incredible. Throughout the scriptures, in early Church history, and from our service with women in the Asia Area, we see the many attributes and contributions of great women of faith.

Women of Faith in the Scriptures and Church History

Brief but meaningful stories of women in the scriptures and Church history illustrate qualities we should desire or actions we may take when faced with similar circumstances. For example, when Eve learned of the plan of happiness, she “was glad,” and with Adam “made all things known” to their children (see Moses 5:11–12). When Esther, at great personal risk, was placed in a situation to save her people, she asked others to fast for her and went forth with courage declaring, “if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16).

Shepherds came to see the newborn Savior of the world. When they

had done so, “they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child,” but “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:17, 19).

Sariah was naturally concerned for her sons when they returned to Jerusalem to obtain the plates from Laban. After they returned safely, Nephi recorded the feelings of his parents, saying, “behold their joy was full, and my mother was comforted” (1 Nephi 5:7).

The first person to whom Joseph mentioned the First Vision was his mother as she discerningly “inquired what the matter was” (Joseph Smith—History 1:20). And when Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball left their wives and children under difficult circumstances to begin their mission to England, these valiant sisters bid them well on their journey with faith and trust in the Lord that their families would be alright.²

The gratitude for the plan of salvation felt by Eve and her desire to teach it to her children; the courage of Esther and her willingness to help others; the humility and thoughtful pondering of Mary, the mother of the Son of God; the loving concern of mother Sariah for her sons; the

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perceptiveness of Lucy Mack Smith; and the devotion and sacrifice of Mary Ann Young and Vilate Kimball illustrate many qualities needed in families and in the Church.

In addition to the sons of Helaman, there are many of us in the Church who can say, “We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (see Alma 56:48).



Swaroopo with her husband Sreedhar Srigiri and their daughter in Bengaluru, India



Sister Dany Pen with her husband, President Bunhuoch Eng, and their four sons in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Women of Faith in Asia

As I travel about the Asia Area, among this group of Heavenly Father’s children, I meet many righteous women who faithfully live the gospel. We are grateful for their valuable contributions in caring for their own families and building up the Church. They demonstrate faith, hope, and charity as they live the first two great commandments of loving God and loving others. With their consent, let me

share just three examples from many I have observed.

Faith

On a Tuesday morning in April 2014, Swaroopa was civilly married in India without any of the traditional celebration. Then, with great sacrifice and faith, Swaroopa and her new husband, Sreedhar Srigiri, flew through the night to be sealed the next day in the Hong Kong China Temple. I

had the privilege of officiating at their sealing.

Shortly before their marriage, Swaroopa had been accepted into the master’s degree program to study physics at an excellent university. As Swaroopa neared graduation, two important events were expected to occur at the same time. On April 6, 2016, Swaroopa gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, and the very next day she took the final exams of her master’s program. She received high marks. She was blessed with a daughter who was born in the covenant and a master’s degree in physics, through her continuing faith and trust in the Lord and His eternal plan of happiness.

Hope

On a Saturday morning last year, prior to a district conference, the district president and I visited several families. One of those was a single sister, about 50 years old, who had joined the Church two years earlier.

This faithful sister lived in a very small concrete room on the end of a larger building, along with her brother who had some health challenges. Their small one-room home had no furniture but was very clean. She worked hard to provide for herself and her brother.

As we sat on the floor visiting, with the district president as our interpreter, I noticed what she had pasted to the wall in front of us. There were small

photos of missionaries, a copy of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,”³ and the Articles of Faith. Prominently displayed on the wall were photos of President Thomas S. Monson and the Hong Kong and Manila Philippines Temples, and, near the center, a well-known painting of the Savior. I could see what was important to her. Though her circumstances are very humble and the opportunities of this life limited, I saw in her hope and peace. I felt of the love our Heavenly Father has for this woman, one of His daughters. She has almost nothing the world considers important, but she knows she is a daughter of God and she has hope.

Charity

In May 2014, the first two stakes were organized in Cambodia. The day before the general session of the conference, Sister Dany Pen, the wife of the district president, President Bunhuoch Eng, was invited to come to the meetinghouse to meet with Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder Zeno Chow of the Sixth Quorum of the Seventy. She felt she might be asked to support her husband in a calling in the new stake presidency. She planned to say no. She and her young sons needed him to be home with them. Their family had already sacrificed much during his service as district president.

When she arrived, the first question Elder Gong asked was, “What do you love about your husband?” As she thought about his many good attributes, she realized he had developed those qualities through his priesthood service. She realized that he is a wonderful husband and father because of his callings. She could no longer say no but very willingly said yes.

Sister Dany Pen is one of many women who do much to unselfishly assist their husbands in service to others. Her charity—her love for God, her husband, and the members of their stake whom he serves—is a great example of keeping the first two commandments. She loves God and loves others and supports her husband in his important service which he could not do without her.

I am grateful for women who live the gospel and provide such important examples of goodness to all of us. I have been very blessed through the teachings of my mother and the dear companionship of my wife. Whatever your own circumstances, may you seek faith, hope, and charity and learn from great women in the gospel. ■

NOTES

1. Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (1971), 13; see also Quentin L. Cook, “LDS Women Are Incredible!” *Liahona*, May 2011, 18–21.
2. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 3rd ed. (1967), 265–66; see also *Church History in the Fulness of Times Student Manual*, 2nd ed. (Church Educational System manual, 2003), 227–28.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.

Women in the Church

By Sister Bani Das

Women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints know they are daughters of Heavenly Father. These women take care of other women, offer comfort, and do needful services. The Lord has said, “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). Women seek friendship, support, and companionship. The women of this dispensation are distinct from any other women. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) prophesied, “Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world (in whom there is often such an inner sense of spirituality) will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world.”¹

When we think of present women of the Church, we cannot forget our pioneers. They were a great example to our present generation. The attributes in the lives of our pioneer women are incredible. The pioneer women were steadfast and firm, and they

sacrificed a lot to reach Salt Lake. During their journey, they lost their loved ones, they were troubled in their hearts, but they never gave up. They pressed forward to continue their journey across the plains to reach Salt Lake. This is a priceless legacy to the Church.

Women of the Church have a special organization where all sisters meet: the Relief Society. The motto of this organization is “Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:8). This motto was very well practiced by our pioneers, especially during times of war, and during the construction of temples. President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) “said that while worldly organizations ‘are men-made or women-made,’ the Relief Society ‘is divinely made, divinely authorized, divinely instituted, divinely ordained of God to minister for the salvations of the souls of women and men.’”²

In addition to working with other organizations, Relief Society sisters did a variety of things by providing goods and raising money for those in need. Some sisters made and sold dresses, aprons, quilts, and hand-woven hats and rugs. Sisters cared for the sick and sewed for those who needed clothing.

Women of the Church are a great strength to the brethren. President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said, “We need women who are

organized and women who can organize. We need women with executive ability who can plan and direct and administer, women who can teach, women who can speak out. . . .

“We need women with the gift of discernment who can view the trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow or dangerous.”³

Women are called to fulfill positions in the Church to serve one another and to bless the entire Church. As women of the Church participate in Relief Society, they serve as disciples of Jesus Christ and they work along with priesthood holders to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen home and families, and seek to help those who are in need.



Sister Bani Das

Women of the Church today are strong, faithful, and offer selfless services for other women. They work in perfect harmony along with priesthood holders. I recall a talk given by a brother in our ward. In his talk he mentioned that he lost his job and felt very uncomfortable to reveal it to his wife. When he reached his home, he decided to tell the truth about it. He expected that his wife would be annoyed and would get frustrated, but to his great astonishment his wife said, “That’s OK. God will take care of us.” Even in times of difficulty, women of the Church stand firm and immovable and support their husbands because they know that Heavenly Father will provide and will not leave them alone in their troubles. Sisters have key roles in the Church, for example, Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies, teachers, and advisers. These women not only have key roles in the Church but also in their families. The responsibilities of the Church do not provide an economic compensation, but still these women perform their duties and are satisfied because it’s the Lord’s work they do.

Despite challenges in their families, they remain strong, immovable, and steadfast to their faith. Women help their communities by offering aid and support to the afflicted during natural calamities. I have been in this Church for the past 10 years. I have learned to love, serve, and lift

others, and to help bring those lost ones to the Church through visiting teaching. In 2015, when my leg was amputated, sisters from the Church visited me in the hospital and at home. They showed their love and comforted me through scriptures. This increased my faith and hope in our Heavenly father and our Savior Jesus Christ.

The remarkable pioneer Emily H. Woodmansee gave text to the hymn, “As Sisters in Zion” (*Hymns*, no. 309). She correctly asserted,

*As sisters in Zion, we'll all work
together;
The blessings of God on our labors
we'll seek.
We'll build up his kingdom with
earnest endeavor;
We'll comfort the weary and
strengthen the weak.*

I testify that God lives and that the work of building up His kingdom is also given to the women of the Church. I testify that these women are a great support and stand strong to support the priesthood. I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

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NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 102; [lds.org/ensign/1979/11/the-role-of-righteous-women](https://www.lds.org/ensign/1979/11/the-role-of-righteous-women).
2. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 65–66.
3. Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 7; [lds.org/ensign/1978/11/the-relief-society](https://www.lds.org/ensign/1978/11/the-relief-society).

Sisterhood—Supportive and Helpful

By Sister Ravulapudi Maleshwar Lalitha

When I first started coming to church in 2011, I did not know what the Relief Society was, but slowly I started to mingle with the sisters who were very helpful and supportive. Before I joined the Church, I felt the burden of being a mother and provider. I turned myself to Heavenly Father and prayerfully asked for guidance. I felt like my prayers were answered when the missionaries found me and visited with my family. I appreciated the constant support and love that they gave me and my family. They were very humble and accepted whatever I could afford to give them when they visited me, even if it was just a glass of water.

At first, it was difficult for me to accept and understand the kindness that was offered to me and my family from members, missionaries, and the Church. My daughters explained to me that it was because the Church was true, which filled my heart with the Spirit. Ever since we got baptized in the Church, my family has been blessed abundantly. I have watched my two daughters grow into beautiful women with values that were taught to them from the



Sister Ravulapudi Maleshwar Lalitha

time they were little girls. My son and husband have been equally supportive. We encourage each other to pay our tithing, go to church, magnify our callings, participate in Church activities, pray, and read the scriptures. With the help of self-reliance principles and the Relief Society, I have learned to be more economical.

I know that I can always rely on my Relief Society sisters. I also know that this Church and the gospel are true with all my heart. ■

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Choosing Faith

By Vikas Kumar Oraon

This world began with faith. Genesis 1:3 is the best example to see the beginning of the world. It was by faith: “God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” We know through the scriptures that it was our Savior Jesus Christ who created this world under the direction of Heavenly Father (see Hebrews 1:1–2; Abraham 4). The Savior was blessed with the priesthood power to act under Almighty God. We see the attributes involved in performing this act are the power of the priesthood and faith. However, what enhances these two things to work together is knowledge. We as mortals fail to recognize this power in us and how it can bless us. Some of us were born with abilities and talents that we developed in the premortal existence. These talents and abilities help us excel the power of knowledge.

In the premortal existence when Heavenly Father presented the plan of salvation, the Savior understood God’s plan for His spirit children. He volunteered to help all His spirit brothers and sisters in implementing the plan. This involves His eternal love for us, another important



Vikas Kumar Oraon

attribute to letting faith work (see Abraham 3:23–28).

These three attributes: knowledge, the power of the priesthood, and love, when combined together, will allow an individual to further develop faith.

As soon as the Savior heard the plan of salvation from our Heavenly Father, He showed His faith. He could see the eternal blessings that Heavenly Father has for His children. Christ decided to put His trust and faith in Almighty God.

As we read the scriptures, we can find this knowledge, and our love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will increase. This will result in showing and choosing faith in our

daily activities. Because the Savior exercised faith, both in premortal and mortal existence, He now stands on the right hand of God (see Acts 7:55–56).

Our day-to-day activity will require us to show our faith. This may be at work assignments, school, home or Church callings. All that we need to do is to follow the Savior’s example. When He volunteered to help us, He showed His faith. When He healed the sick, He showed his faith. When He was tried and tested before kings and rulers, He showed His faith. Even on the verge of death He showed His faith.

He had chosen to act according to faith. As we practice this in our lives, we will see ourselves improving and increasing in our faith in Jesus Christ. This will enable us to receive many blessings. Whether it be temporal or spiritual, the key attributes to work on are knowledge, the power of the priesthood, and love. In this Savior’s promised blessing stay firm: “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Vikas Kumar Oraon, Hyderabad Stake

SABBATH DAY OBSERVANCE

Sabbath day—a Gift

Two scriptures populate in my mind when I think of the Sabbath:

1. “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).
2. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

The recent emphasis of making the Sabbath day a delight is a direct inspiration from the Lord to His leaders.

Personally speaking, observing the Sabbath day has always been a blessing to me rather than a burden. My main focus of the Sabbath day is attending sacrament meeting. It is a blessing and a privilege to be able to partake of His sacrament. As the sacrament prayers are said, it is a personal commitment that I am making to take upon me His name, willing to always remember Him and to keep His commandments. In return, the Savior has promised to renew my covenants by the remission of my sins and enabling me to have His Spirit.

Observing the Sabbath is exhibiting a form of righteousness, which helps me focus more on the Lord Jesus Christ and allows me to be in the world but not of the world.

“President Russell M. Nelson taught us . . . that the Sabbath is the Lord’s gift to us. Our devoted weekly observance of the Sabbath is our sign to the Lord

that we love Him” (Randall K. Bennett, “Your Next Step,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 70; see also “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Liahona*, May 2015, 129–32.).

Truly speaking, Sabbath day observance is a gift to us. Keeping the Sabbath day holy is one of the ways we show our love to the Lord. It will help us set aside all the worldly cares and selfish interests and give us an opportunity to become closer to our Savior. It provides us refuge from the storms of this life. It’s a sign that we show our devotion to the Lord and

an increased understanding of sacredness of this day.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said, “There isn’t anybody in this Church who has to buy furniture on Sunday. There really isn’t. There isn’t anybody in this Church who has to buy a new automobile on Sunday, is there? No. There isn’t anybody in this Church who, with a little care and planning, has to buy groceries on Sunday. No. . . . You don’t need ice cream to be bought on Sunday. . . . You don’t need to make Sunday a day of merchandising. I don’t think we need to patronize the ordinary business merchants on the Sabbath



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day. Why do they stay open? To get customers. Who are those customers? Well, they are not all nonmembers of this Church. You know that and I know that” (Heber City/Springville, Utah, regional conference, priesthood leadership meeting, 13 May 1995).

Adding to that instruction about the Sabbath, the song from *Children’s Songbook* (“Saturday,” *Children’s Songbook*, 196) says:

*Saturday is a special day.
It’s the day we get ready for Sunday:
We clean the house, and we shop at
the store,
So we won’t have to work until
Monday.
We brush our clothes, and we shine
our shoes,
And we call it our get-the-work
done day.
Then we trim our nails, and we
shampoo our hair,
So we can be ready for Sunday!*

Planning ahead has helped me keep the Sabbath day holy and maintain the reverence of it. Just as the song goes, my preparation starts on Saturday, and apart from this I also ensure to fuel my vehicle and buy all things required ahead of Sunday. I testify that everyone who does prepare ahead for Sunday will have an added measure of the Spirit and an increased desire to follow our Savior by showing obedience.

The Sabbath day doesn’t conclude by attending three hours of Church meetings. President Spencer W. Kimball said our “abstinence from work and recreation is important but insufficient. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts, and if one merely lounges about doing nothing on the Sabbath, he is breaking it” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 96–97).

When I was pondering on making the Sabbath even more of a delight, I was inspired to read talks from general conference. As I obeyed that prompting each Sunday, I testify that there is an increased amount of spiritual strength and motivation to follow the counsel from the leaders of the Church. By doing this, I was able to receive inspiration in my hour of

need, and I’m greatly overwhelmed to have such a wonderful gift and blessing as my constant companion.

I testify that as we keep the Sabbath day holy, we emulate the Savior’s example. It brings blessings and protection not only to an individual but also to families. I know that the Lord has blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. I know that Jesus is the Christ and that He has atoned for my sins. I know that Heavenly Father lives and loves me. I know the Book of Mormon to be true and the keystone of our religion. I know that Thomas S. Monson is a prophet of God. I testify that Joseph Smith did see Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and that through him the true gospel and Church was restored. In His most precious name, even Jesus Christ, I conclude, amen. ■

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Church leaders have for the past year placed emphasis on the observance of the Sabbath day. Members can share their spiritual experiences on the observance of the Sabbath day. You send your articles to indiablrces@yahoo.com. Members can also share articles on topics other than Sabbath day observance. ■

