

Women and Education

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Our young women properly aspire to and prepare themselves for the experiences and blessings of motherhood, which is their highest calling and opportunity for service. . . .

Our young women's primary orientation toward motherhood is not inconsistent with their diligent pursuit of an education, even their efforts in courses of study that are vocationally related. . . . A young woman's education should prepare her for more than the responsibilities of motherhood. It should prepare her for the entire period of her life.

Many of our young women will need to earn a living for themselves because they do not marry, because they do not marry until after some years of employment, or because they have been widowed or through other circumstances have been compelled to assume the responsibilities of the family breadwinner. A mother who must earn a living for the family in addition to performing the duties of motherhood probably has as great a need for education as any person in the world.

There are other reasons why it is important for our young women to receive a proper education. Education is more than vocational. Education should improve our minds, strengthen our bodies, heighten our cultural awareness, and increase our spirituality. It should prepare us for greater service to the human family. Such an education will improve a woman's ability to function as an informed and effective teacher of her sons

and daughters and as a worthy and wise counselor and companion to her husband. Some have observed that the mother's vital teaching responsibility makes it even more important to have educated mothers than to have educated fathers. "When you teach a boy, you are just teaching another individual," President Harold B. Lee quoted, "but when you teach a woman or a girl, you are teaching a whole family."¹

One of the most important purposes of a university education is to prepare men and women to be responsible and intelligent leaders and participants in the lives of their families, in their church, and in their communities. That kind of education is needed by young men and young women alike. In short, we make no distinction between young men and young women in our conviction about the importance of an education and in our commitment to providing that education.

Note

1. Harold B. Lee, referencing Catherine E. Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy: For the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and at School*, rev. ed. (Boston: Thomas H. Webb and Company, 1843), 37: "The proper education of a man decides the welfare of an individual; but educate a woman, and the interests of a whole family are secured"; in Lee, "Place of Mothers in the Plan of Teaching the Gospel in the Home," *Relief Society Magazine*, January 1965, 8.

This is an excerpt of a devotional address delivered by Dallin H. Oaks, president of Brigham Young University, on February 12, 1974.