

A Message to Our Granddaughters

JAMES E. FAUST

Because some may not agree with what I have to say, I would direct these remarks primarily to our granddaughters. The rest of you are invited to listen.

On Brittany's last birthday, I told her mother with considerable grandfatherly pride that I thought I detected some seeds of promise developing in Brittany. Of course I feel the same way about Nicole, Melissa, Kelly Ann, Katy, Sarah, and little Ashley, our other granddaughters.

I do not want to tell you girls what you must be. That is for each of you to decide. You have your free agency. Each of you will have to work very hard to learn all you can and develop your skills. It will not be easy to achieve anything really worthwhile. I want only to tell you what I think will help bring to you identity, value, and happiness as a person. I also want to challenge you to reach your potential, to become a person of great worth, to become a great woman. Because you descended from great women, each of you has the potential to become a great woman.

Now you need to know that to me great does not necessarily mean your becoming a great doctor, lawyer, or business executive. You may, of course, become any of these if you so desire, if you work hard enough, and I would

be proud of such an achievement. However, to me greatness is much, much more. I hope that each of you girls will become an individual of significant worth and a person of virtue so that your contributions are maintained in both human and eternal terms.

You Have a Great Mission

Elder Boyd K. Packer tells me that among the species of birds where both male and female sing, they sing a different melody. Yet it is pleasant to hear them singing at the same time, and they harmonize beautifully together!

There can be no question but that women are wonderful and special. You also have a great mission, a great errand, and a great calling. The work of God was devised by God for both men and women. "All those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom" (D&C 25:1). Being born as women brings to you many endowments that are not common to men and therefore make you unique.

James E. Faust was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 12 February 1985.

President Spencer W. Kimball, in speaking of the roles of men and women, said in a way that adds some personal perspective,

Within those great assurances, however, our roles and assignments differ. These are eternal differences—with women being given many tremendous responsibilities of motherhood and sisterhood and men being given the tremendous responsibilities of fatherhood and the priesthood—but the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord. . . .

*Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to. You are accountable for those things which long ago were expected of you just as are those we sustain as prophets and apostles! . . . This leaves much to be done by way of parallel personal development—for both men and women. [Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 102]*

This statement suggests that before we were born we made certain commitments, female and male, and that we agreed to come to this earth with great, rich, but separate gifts. We were called, male and female, to do great works, with separate approaches and separate assignments and accordingly were given different songs to sing.

You say, Where do I begin? Rather than beginning with a wish list of all the things you want in life, the real question may be what you are not willing to do without. You should select two or three of life’s experiences you are absolutely sure you want to have—you should not leave important things to chance. Then you should think about what you can contribute to society by way of service to the Church, home, and community. You need also to think of what life will demand from you. Everything has its price. Much is expected of us.

It is unfortunate that it is taking so long to bring full economic justice to women. The feminization of poverty is both real and tragic. That is why you should work very hard to prepare for your future with some marketable skills.

The struggle to improve the place of women in society has been a noble cause, and I sincerely hope the day will come when women with equal skills will be fully equal with men in the marketplace. However, this is an issue of equality, not sameness, and does not mean that women should be the same as men or try to do things the way men do them. Although some jobs that are traditionally masculine are now being done by women, it is possible for them to be done in a feminine way, and yet be done equally as well, or possibly even better.

Over a hundred years ago, in 1872, Eliza R. Snow said that some women “are so radical in their extreme theories that they would set her in antagonism to man, [and] . . . make her adopt the more reprehensible phases of character which men present, and which should be shunned or improved by them instead of being copied by women” (“Woman’s Status,” *Woman’s Exponent*, 15 July 1872, p. 29). Becoming like men is not the answer; being who you are and living up to your potential and commitment is.

You cannot trust the many conflicting voices that clamor about what women should or should not do in today’s society. Some of the loudest voices we hear are echoes of others who, rather than being unhappy with their role as women, seem actually out of harmony with themselves and out of tune with life in general.

Women today are being encouraged by some to have it all: money, travel, marriage, motherhood, and separate careers in the world. Sarah Davidson, in an article entitled “Having It All,” comments about forging an identity, building a career, developing a craft, and having a family. She answers the question about how the woman who is intent on having it all

can coordinate the roles of professional life, marriage, and motherhood:

I do not yet understand how a woman can successfully split herself between home and the marketplace. Fifteen years of feminist theory and action have taught us that sacrificing one for the other does not satisfy, but having both together simultaneously is so difficult that no one I know has found anything but the most quirky and incomplete solution. [Sarah Davidson, "Having It All," Esquire, June 1984, p. 54]

Some will no doubt disagree with this conclusion, and there may be many exceptions, but she goes on to tell of three women who are partners in a New York law firm, and observes that their personal lives are terrible. Continues Sarah Davidson: "The problem, of course, is that family happiness is less clearly definable and often more elusive than career success" ("Having It All," p. 56). For some the answer has been to find and marry a man who will assume the female roles. But such men are rare. It seems to be much more difficult for men to assume female roles in the home than for women.

The same author says:

At some point along the way a number of us woke up and found that we were wonderfully self-sufficient and successful and our lives were empty. There was no one to share it with, no living, growing ties to the future. Something vital had been discarded, and we scurried to recapture it. ["Having It All," p. 56]

As Sarah Davidson approached forty, she and her husband were blessed with a baby. Of this phenomenon she says:

This baby was the great missing link for me, the one thing I have longed for in my life that, once realized, brought the satisfaction I'd hoped for. . . .

Nothing in my life prepared me for the happiness, the wholeness I felt when my son was born. I am embarrassed to tell you how many nights I would walk into his room and just stand at the crib, my heart brimming. . . .

. . . The bond between a mother and child is so special—it's in the soul. . . .

. . . All my time is spent on three things: baby, work, and keeping the marriage going.

I find I can handle two beautifully. When my husband is out of town, or when I'm between projects and not working, things go smoothly. But three pushes me to the edge. Someone is unhappy, something is always getting short shrift. ["Having It All," p. 54–60 passim]

No doubt it would help if husbands would follow the counsel of the late Elder G. Homer Durham: "Man, as well as woman, has obligations to learn the difficult art of fatherhood in homemaking. This is not a task just for the woman" ("Woman's Responsibility to Learn," *Woman* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], p. 36).

The Seasons of Life

And so, my dear granddaughters, it would seem that you cannot do all of these things well at the same time. You cannot eat all of the pastries in the baking shop at once. You will get a tummyache. You cannot be a 100 percent wife, a 100 percent mother, a 100 percent church worker, a 100 percent career person, and a 100 percent public service person at the same time. How can all of these roles be coordinated? Says Sarah Davidson:

The only answer I come up with is that you can have it sequentially. At one stage you may emphasize career, and at another, marriage and nurturing young children, and at any point you will be aware of what is missing. If you are lucky, you will be able to fit everything in. ["Having It All," p. 60]

Sequentially is a big word meaning to do things one at a time at different times. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, it says: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). It seems that the new roles of women have not decreased their responsibility because, while the new roles are challenging, the old roles of wife and mother are in the soul and cry out to be satisfied. It is in the soul to want to love and be loved by a good man and to be able to respond to the God-given, deepest feelings of womanhood—those of being a mother and nurturer. Fortunately, women do not have to track a career like a man does. A woman may fit more than one career into the various seasons of life. She cannot sing all of the verses of her song at the same time.

Granddaughters, do not be deceived in your quest to find happiness and an identity of your own. Entreating voices may tell you that what you have experienced in your own homes—that which you have seen your mothers and grandmothers do—is old-fashioned, unchallenging, boring, and drudgery. It may have been old-fashioned and perhaps routine; at times it was drudgery. But your mothers and grandmothers have sung a song that expressed the highest love and the noblest of womanly feelings. They have been nurturers and teachers.

I join Brigham Young in saying: “Daughter, use all your gifts to build up righteousness in the earth” (Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* [New York: Macmillan Co., 1930], p. 307). I hope you would acquire all of the knowledge you can. Become as skillful as you can, but not exclusively in new careers at the expense of the primary ones, or you may find that you have missed singing the song you were supposed to sing.

Establish Your Priorities

Some divisive voices would suggest that the wants and needs of women in society have changed and that political power is the pri-

mary interest and need of women in this day. This would not seem to be so. A recent poll indicated that the present individual priorities of women are:

1. A strong family.
2. Raising children.
3. Growing spiritually.
4. Economic equity.

This means that the values of women in this country are compatible with, but perhaps not quite as strong as, the values of women in our Church. You need not be defensive or ashamed of these priorities of family, children, church, and equal economic opportunities.

Your grandmother and I urged your mothers to get an education, not only to help them in their homemaking but also to prepare them to earn a living outside the home if that became necessary. Going to college is a wonderful experience, but the dollars, the effort, and the time are much better used if the education also prepares the student to have a marketable skill.

I have said that you are wonderful, special, and unique for many reasons. Let me tell you some of these reasons.

Women seem to arrive at decisions based upon a different value system. I have noticed that your grandmother thinks considerably from her heart. My approach seems more logical. Your grandmother is concerned about how those decisions affect people around her. Beverley Campbell talks about it this way: For a woman, “her primary concern is what will be the greatest good for the greatest number of those around her. In value terms, this would be called ‘care’ and ‘mercy.’ For men, the research indicated that the moral thought process was probably much more direct. It generally boiled down to hard and fast rules of right and wrong, of black and white” (Beverley Campbell, “Understanding the Uniqueness of Woman,” unpublished manuscript).

Sister Campbell says:

Could it be that we, each of us, man and woman, were endowed at the time of creation with two distinct but equally important traits, traits which are both essential and complementary and are to be used together in wisdom for the greatest good of all mankind? ["Understanding the Uniqueness of Woman"]

It may not be possible for economic reasons, but if you have the choice, do not abandon too quickly the full-time career of marriage and mothering. Some may criticize you and say that you have no gumption, that you lack brains, that you have no ambition, or even that you are seeking to get your fulfillment from others. As you go forward with a professional career, remember that no one will love you more than those in your own home. In the business or scientific world, probably no one would consider you to be perfect. But your little ones, for a time, will think you are perfect. If you are wise, they will adore you for eternity. No one will need more of your time and energy and attention on a twenty-four-hour basis than your family. Their needs will not go away during the daytime working hours. There is the advantage that in working twenty-four hours a day on family relations, you are working on eternal relations. Thus you will also have more time to serve in the administration of the Lord's church on earth where your service is valued and needed. You don't have to earn money to be important. You may choose not to sell your time.

I hope your husbands will be more helpful than I have been, but homemaking is whatever you make of it. Every day brings satisfaction along with some work which may be frustrating, routine, drudgery, and unchallenging. But it is the same in the law office, the dispensary, the library, or the store. There is, however, no more important job than homemaking. As C. S. Lewis said, it "is the one for which all others exist."

Seek First the Kingdom of God

You all know that I adore your grandmother. To me, she is the greatest person in the world. She has done more for me than anyone except my own mother who gave me life. I hold this view, not *in spite* of the fact that she is a woman, but *because* she is a woman. She has brought to flower and fruitage many of the divine qualities of womanhood at their noblest and best. I can give you no better model.

Now it is very important, whatever you do, that you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (see Matthew 6:33). It is important that you accept without reservation the Savior for what he was, and Joseph Smith for what he said he was, and President Spencer W. Kimball for what he is. God will not ennoble a person, man or woman, who refuses to uphold by faith, prayer, and works those whom God has called and ordained to preside over them. So, my dear granddaughters, you will want to sustain the priesthood authority.

Some women may feel it is subversive to their free agency to be directed by the power of the priesthood. This feeling comes from misunderstanding. There should be no compulsion, duress, or unrighteous dominion involved in priesthood authority. President Stephen L. Richards stated:

Our accord comes from universal agreement with righteous principles and common response to the operation of the Spirit of our Father. It is actuated by no fear except one. That is the fear of offending God, the Author of our work. [CR, October 1938, p. 116]

Following the priesthood of the Church is an expression of faith in the Lord's continuing guidance of his Church. It is a willing acceptance of the principle of divine agency.

Girls, you must practice virtue in its largest sense. Of the many definitions of virtue, such as moral excellence, right action and thinking, goodness of character, and chastity in women,

I also appreciate the definition in theology. Virtue in theology is an order of the angels. You cannot become great women if you are not also good women. You will become great women if you join an order of angels. You may ask, “How do I join an order of angels?” My answer is that you must hunger and thirst after righteousness. William Law, an eighteenth-century clergyman, said: “If you have not chosen the Kingdom of God first, it will in the end make no difference what you have chosen instead.”

Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness

I will tell you of one of the great women I have known for over forty years. Sister Isabelle Bangerter, age ninety-three, is the mother of eleven outstanding children. My missionary companion, Elder Wm. Grant Bangerter, is the second eldest of these children. Our governor, Norman Bangerter, is the tenth child. She has a posterity of over two hundred and forty. All those who are married have been married in the temple. All of the males but two have gone on missions. There have been no divorces among her family. As I have wondered what made Isabelle Bangerter so great, I have concluded that it was because she has hungered and thirsted for righteousness. She sang all of the verses of her song in her home and in the Church.

President Kimball said it well when he stated:

Among the real heroines in the world who will come into the Church are women who are more concerned with being righteous than with being selfish.

*These real heroines have true humility, which places a higher value on integrity than on visibility. Remember, it is as wrong to do things just to be seen of women as it is to do things to be seen of men. Great women and men are always more anxious to serve than to have dominion. [Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, November 1979, p. 104]*

Next to last, you will have to answer to your natural womanly instincts which the Prophet Joseph said are according to your natures. You should respond generously to these instincts and promptings to do good. With your very being held still, you should listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. You should follow the noble, intuitive feelings planted deep within your soul by deity in the previous world. In this way you will be responding to the Holy Spirit of God, and will be sanctified by truth. By so doing, you will be eternally honored and loved. Much of your work is to enrich mankind. Care and mercy seem to be a dominant refrain of the song you have the opportunity to sing. I hope you will not leave any of the melody unsung.

Lastly, how do I think you, my beloved granddaughters, may become great women? You should cultivate and employ generously your noble womanly instincts of care and mercy. You should always hunger and thirst after righteousness within the framework of the revealed gospel of Jesus Christ. And, finally, most of what you do should be done within an eternal perspective.

That this may be so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.