

MOTHERS' EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE THE HOME

*It is well-nigh impossible
to be a full-time homemaker
and a full-time employee.*

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

SELECTED TEACHINGS

President Spencer W. Kimball

“The husband is expected to support his family and only in an emergency should a wife secure outside employment. Her place is in the home, to build the home into a heaven of delight.

“Numerous divorces can be traced directly to the day when the wife left the home and went out into the world into employment. Two incomes raise the standard of living beyond its norm. Two spouses working prevent the complete and proper home life, break into the family prayers, create an independence which is not cooperative, causes distortion, limits the family and frustrates the children already born. . . .

“. . . I beg of you, you who could and should be bearing and rearing a family: Wives, come home from the typewriter, the laundry, the nursing, come home from the factory, the café.

“No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother—cooking meals, washing dishes, making beds for one’s precious husband and children.

“Come home, wives, to your husbands. Make home a heaven for them. Come home wives, to your children, born and unborn. Wrap the motherly cloak about you and unembarrassed help in a major role to create the bodies for the immortal souls who anxiously wait.

“When you have fully complemented your husband in home life and borne the children, growing up full of faith, integrity, responsibility and goodness, then you have achieved your accomplishments supreme, without peer, and you will be the envy through

time and eternity” (fireside address in San Antonio, Texas, 27, 32–33).

“How do you feel the Lord looks upon those who would trade flesh-and-blood children for pianos or television or furniture or an automobile, and is this not actually the case when people will buy these luxuries and yet cannot afford to have their children?” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 329).

“We have often said, This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public nurseries cannot do it. Hired help cannot do it; kind relatives cannot do it. Only by mother, aided as much as may be by a loving father, brothers and sisters, and other relatives, can the full needed measure of watchful care be given” (“The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 73).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Take time to always be at the crossroads when your children are either coming or going—when they leave and return from school, when they leave and return from dates, when they bring friends home. Be there at the crossroads whether your children are six or sixteen. In Proverbs we read, ‘A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame’ (Proverbs 29:15). Among the greatest concerns in our society are the millions of latchkey children who come home daily to empty houses, unsupervised by working parents” (*To the Mothers in Zion*, 8).

“In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect the wives to go out of the home and work, even though the husband is capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting may have to be tighter. . . .

“Sometimes the mother works outside of the home at the encouragement, or even insistence, of her husband. It is he who wants the items or conveniences that the extra income can buy. Not only will the family suffer in such instances, brethren, but your own spiritual growth and progression will be

hampered. I say to all of you, the Lord has charged men with the responsibility to provide for their families in such a way that the wife is allowed to fulfill her role as mother in the home. . . .

“One apparent impact of the women’s movement has been the feelings of discontent it has created among young women who have chosen the role of wife and mother. They are often made to feel that there are more exciting and self-fulfilling roles for women than housework, diaper changing, and children calling for mother. This view loses sight of the eternal perspective that God elected women to the noble role of mother and that exaltation is eternal fatherhood and eternal motherhood. [‘To the Elect Women of the Kingdom of God,’ Nauvoo Illinois Relief Society Dedication, 30 June 1978.]” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 506–7, 548–49).

“There are voices in our midst which would attempt to convince you that these home-centered truths are not applicable to our present-day conditions. If you listen and heed, you will be lured away from your principal obligations.

“Beguiling voices in the world cry out for ‘alternative life-styles’ for women. They maintain that some women are better suited for careers than for marriage and motherhood.

“These individuals spread their discontent by the propaganda that there are more exciting and self-fulfilling roles for women than homemaking. Some even have been bold to suggest that the Church move away from the ‘Mormon woman stereotype’ of homemaking and rearing children. They also say it is wise to limit your family so you can have more time for personal goals and self-fulfillment” (“The Honored Place of Woman,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 105).

“The first priority for a woman is to prepare herself for her divine and eternal mission, whether she is married soon or late. It is folly to neglect that preparation for education in unrelated fields just to prepare temporarily to earn money. Women, when you are married it is the husband’s role to provide, not yours. Do not sacrifice your preparation for an eternally ordained mission for the temporary expediency of money-making skills which you may or may not use” (“In His Steps,” 64).

“It is time that the hearts of us fathers be turned to our children and the hearts of the children be turned to us fathers, or we shall both be cursed. The seeds of divorce are often sown and the blessings of

children delayed by wives working outside the home. Working mothers should remember that their children usually need more of mother than of money” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 24).

President Howard W. Hunter

See quotation on page 208.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Sisters, guard your children. They live in a world of evil. The forces are all about them. I am proud of so many of your sons and daughters who are living good lives. But I am deeply concerned about many others who are gradually taking on the ways of the world. Nothing is more precious to you as mothers, absolutely nothing. Your children are the most valuable thing you will have in time or all eternity. You will be fortunate indeed if, as you grow old and look at those you brought into the world, you find in them uprightness of life, virtue in living, and integrity in their behavior.

“I think the nurture and upbringing of children is more than a part-time responsibility. I recognize that some women must work, but I fear that there are far too many who do so only to get the means for a little more luxury and a few fancier toys.

“If you must work, you have an increased load to bear. You cannot afford to neglect your children. They need your supervision in studying, in working inside and outside the home, in the nurturing that only you can adequately give—the love, the blessing, the encouragement, and the closeness of a mother.

“Families are being torn asunder everywhere. Family relationships are strained as women try to keep up with the rigors of two full-time jobs.

“I have many opportunities to speak with leaders who decry what is going on—gangs on the streets of our cities, children killing children, spending their time in practices that can lead only to prison or to death. We face a great overwhelming tide of children born to mothers without husbands. The futures of such children are almost inevitably blighted from the day they are born. Every home needs a good father and a good mother.

“We cannot build prisons fast enough in this country to accommodate the need.

“I do not hesitate to say that you who are mothers can do more than any other group to change this

situation. All of these problems find their root in the homes of the people. It is broken homes that lead to a breakup in society.

"And so tonight, my beloved sisters, my message to you, my challenge to you, my prayer is that you will rededicate yourselves to the strengthening of your homes" ("Walking in the Light of the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 99–100).

"Some years ago President Benson delivered a message to the women of the Church. He encouraged them to leave their employment and give their individual time to their children. I sustain the position which he took.

"Nevertheless, I recognize, as he recognized, that there are some women (it has become very many, in fact) who have to work to provide for the needs of their families. To you I say, do the very best you can. I hope that if you are employed full-time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries. The greatest job that any mother will ever do will be in nurturing, teaching, lifting, encouraging, and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. None other can adequately take her place.

"It is well-nigh impossible to be a full-time homemaker and a full-time employee. I know how some of you struggle with decisions concerning this matter. I repeat, do the very best you can. You know your circumstances, and I know that you are deeply concerned for the welfare of your children. Each of you has a bishop who will counsel with you and assist you. If you feel you need to speak with an understanding woman, do not hesitate to get in touch with your Relief Society president.

"To the mothers of this Church, every mother who is here today, I want to say that as the years pass, you will become increasingly grateful for that which you did in molding the lives of your children in the direction of righteousness and goodness, integrity and faith. That is most likely to happen if you can spend adequate time with them" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 93–94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 69).

"To you women who find it necessary to work when you would rather be at home, may I speak briefly. I know that there are many of you who find yourselves in this situation. Some of you have been abandoned and are divorced, with children to care for. Some of you are widows with dependent families. I honor

you and respect you for your integrity and spirit of self-reliance. I pray that the Lord will bless you with strength and great capacity, for you need both. You have the responsibilities of both breadwinner and homemaker. I know that it is difficult. I know that it is discouraging. I pray that the Lord will bless you with a special wisdom and the remarkable talent needed to provide your children with time and companionship and love and with that special direction which only a mother can give. I pray also that he will bless you with help, unstintingly given, from family, friends, and the Church, which will lift some of the burden from your shoulders and help you in your times of extremity.

"We sense, at least in some small degree, the loneliness you must occasionally feel and the frustrations you must experience as you try to cope with problems that sometimes seem beyond your capacity to handle. Sometimes you need food for your tables, and we trust that bishops will be there to supply food and other goods and services under the great program which the Lord has provided in his Church. But we know that more often your greater need is for understanding and appreciation and companionship. We shall try a little harder to cultivate these virtues, and I urge you sisters who are in a position to do so to reach out with greater concern to those who find themselves in these less fortunate circumstances.

"Now to others who work when it is not necessary and who, while doing so, leave children to the care of those who often are only poor substitutes, I offer a word of caution. Do not follow a practice which will bring you later regret. If the purpose of your daily employment is simply to get money for a boat or a fancy automobile or some other desirable but unnecessary thing, and in the process you lose the companionship of your children and the opportunity to rear them, you may find that you have lost the substance while grasping at the shadow" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 114; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 83).

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

"By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers

are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Elder Howard W. Hunter

"In a personal way, I recall the experiences my dear wife and I went through after deciding the course I should take for my life's work. I had taken some courses in pharmacy with the plan in mind of converting to a career in medicine. As many of us do, I changed my mind and engaged in another business, banking. We were blessed with steady employment, but I felt attracted toward the profession of law. This was a serious decision because I was married and had a family to support but after fasting and prayer and obtaining the facts as to the best way to proceed, I completed my undergraduate work and entered law school. I took classes at night because it was necessary to be employed during the daytime. These were not easy years for us, but desires are usually accomplished if we are willing to make a determined effort. Needless to say, I had the help and support of my wife. She remained a homemaker and cared for our children. What she gave in love, encouragement, frugality, and companionship was far in excess of any material contribution she might have made by taking employment.

"Our wives deserve great credit for the heavy work load they carry day in and day out within our homes. No one expends more energy than a devoted mother and wife. In the usual arrangement of things, however, it is the man to whom the Lord has assigned the breadwinner's role.

"There are impelling reasons for our sisters to plan toward employment also. We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not

marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts.

"Brothers and Sisters, we need to do everything necessary to adequately prepare ourselves for employment or careers. We owe it to ourselves to do our best, and we owe our best in providing for our families" ("Prepare for Honorable Employment," *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 123–24).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

"The First Presidency counseled that 'the mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, or for civic service, should remember that 'a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.' (Prov. 29:15) In our day the Lord has said that unless parents teach their children the doctrines of the Church 'the sin be upon the heads of the parents.' (D&C 68:25) . . .

"That message and warning from the First Presidency is needed more, not less, today than when it was given [in 1942]. And no voice from any organization of the Church on any level of administration equals that of the First Presidency" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 23).

Elder Richard G. Scott

"President Benson has taught that a mother with children should be in the home. He also said, 'We realize . . . that some of our choice sisters are widowed and divorced and that others find themselves in unusual circumstances where, out of necessity, they are required to work for a period of time. But these instances are the exception, not the rule' (Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* [pamphlet, 1987], pp. 5–6). You in these unusual circumstances qualify for additional inspiration and strength from the Lord. Those who leave the home for lesser reasons will not" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 42–43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 34).