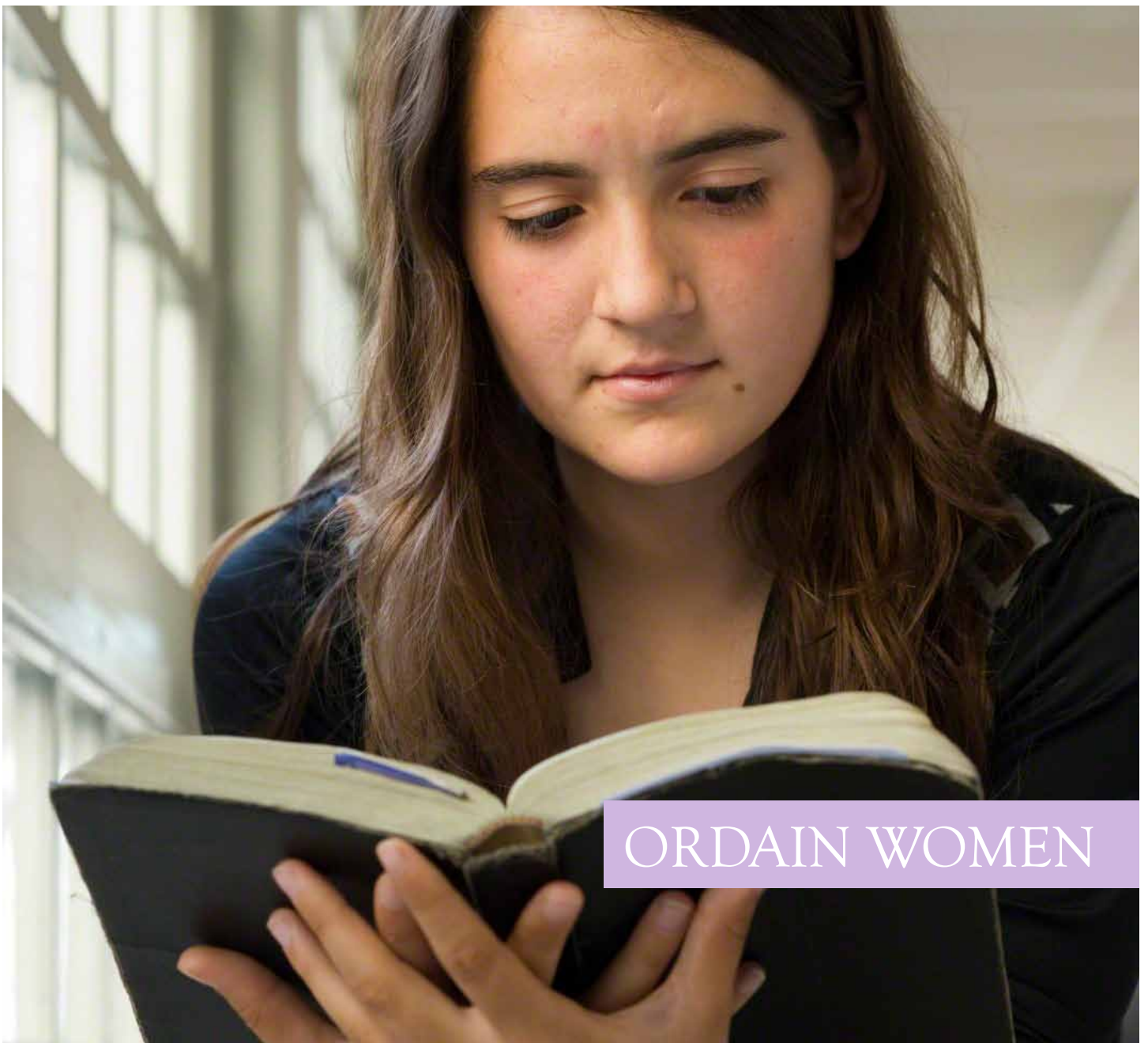


Study the Scriptures

Discussion Three



ORDAIN WOMEN



STUDY THE SCRIPTURES

Discussion Three

“We rejoice that we are privileged to live in this season of the history of the Church when questions are being asked about the priesthood. There is great interest and desire to know and understand more about the authority, power, and blessings associated with the priesthood of God. ... Searching, pondering, and studying the scriptures are invitations for the Holy Ghost to reveal to us important truths about the priesthood.”

-General Relief Society President Linda K. Burton, 2014 ¹



OW DISCUSSION THREE READINGS

Participants should prepare beforehand by reading the following scriptures, talks and discussion guide. The commentary in the discussion guide is intended to spark a thoughtful, open-ended conversation about some of the fundamental tenets of Mormonism that many believe support the ordination of women and advocacy for gender equality. We recognize that interpretations will vary. Since Ordain Women (OW) takes seriously the words of Church leaders and holds sacred the scriptures, the third discussion was framed solely around official Church sources. OW encourages everyone to diligently study the scriptures and seek answers for their personal questions and concerns. (D&C 8:2).

2 Nephi 26:33, Galatians 3:27-29, Acts 10:34, D&C 14:7, Moses 1:39, Psalms 82:6, Romans 8:16-17, Abraham 3:22-28, D&C 93:29, D&C 84: 35-39, D&C 121: 36, D&C 107:18-19, Articles of Faith 1:9, Amos 3:7, D&C 93:30, Moroni 7:19, Articles of Faith 1:13, D&C 58:26-27, D&C 8:2.

Neil A. Andersen, “Power in the Priesthood,” October 2013 LDS General Conference
<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/power-in-the-priesthood?lang=eng>

M. Russell Ballard, “Let Us Think Straight,” August 2013 Devotional Address, BYU Campus Education Week
<http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=2133>

Linda K. Burton, “Priesthood Power—Available to All,” Ensign, June 2014
<https://www.lds.org/ensign/2014/06/priesthood-power-available-to-all?lang=eng>

Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” April 2014 Priesthood Session, LDS General Conference
<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/the-keys-and-authority-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng>

DISCUSSION THREE INTRO ACTIVITY

SCRIPTURE CHASE (OPTIONAL)

This Scripture Chase activity will help identify key scriptures that will be discussed in this packet. Some participants might remember these from Primary and Seminary.

INSTRUCTIONS: Have a participant begin reading one of the scriptures (included at the end of this packet), and as soon as participants recognize it, they can either shout out the chapter/verse or flip to it in their scriptures. One point goes to the first person who correctly identifies the scripture and five points to anyone in the group who can recite it from memory. The winner claims the Scripture Mastery title for the group.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION INCLUDED IN DISCUSSION TWO?

Discussion Two, *Know the History*, suggested that both the events in the Bible and the Restoration took place in societies hostile to women's equality. Yet, there are no scriptural bans on women's ordination and, indeed, there are many examples of women's empowerment, including their apparent ordination and ability to exercise priesthood authority. In the Bible, there are examples of women prophetesses—Miriam (Exodus 15:19-22), Deborah (Judges 4:4-5), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-17), Anna (Luke 2:27, 36-38)—and women, during the first century after Christ's ministry, who were referred to as deaconesses—Priscilla and Phoebe—and apostles—Junia (See Romans 16 NRSV). According to the *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book*, Joseph Smith gave keys of administration and the promise of priestly authority to members of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society and endowed women with priesthood power through temple rituals, which they used to bless each other and administer their organization.² After Joseph's death, women gradually lost institutional authority, the ability to perform blessings and the vision of themselves as endowed with priestly power, particularly after the priesthood correlation program was implemented in the 20th century. If Joseph intended full priesthood authority and offices for the women of the Church, his vision was never fully realized. But can it be?

WHAT IS PRIESTHOOD?

"Priesthood is the eternal power and authority of God," by which the earth was created, the Church is organized and directed, ordinances and blessings are performed, and exaltation is obtained.³

WHY AREN'T WOMEN PRESENTLY ORDAINED TO OFFICES IN THE PRIESTHOOD?

In the October 2013 general conference, Elder Neil L. Andersen answered the question, "Why are the ordinances of the priesthood administered by men?" by citing 1 Nephi 11:17, "I do not know the meaning of all things."⁴ Similarly, Elder M. Russell Ballard, speaking at BYU's Campus Education Week Devotional, asked, "Why are men ordained to priesthood offices and not women?" His answer: "When all is said and done, the Lord has not revealed why ..."

However, as President Burton stated above, "We rejoice that we are privileged to live in this season of the history of the Church when questions are being asked about the priesthood."

HAVING REVIEWED THE CITED TALKS BY PRESIDENT BURTON AND ELDERS ANDERSEN, BALLARD AND OAKS, WHAT ARE SOME IDEAS THAT EMERGE FROM THEIR DISCUSSIONS OF PRIESTHOOD KEYS, OFFICE, POWER, BLESSINGS AND AUTHORITY?

1. Priesthood is not male.
2. Both men and women enjoy the blessings and power of the priesthood.
3. Both men and women exercise the authority of the priesthood in their callings.
4. Presently women's priesthood authority is reflective and exercised under the direction of male leaders who hold priesthood office and the keys of priesthood administration.
5. Others?
 - How are priesthood keys, office, power and authority defined?
 - Why is it important to uncouple priesthood from maleness?
 - How do women presently access the power of the priesthood?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO EXERCISE PRIESTHOOD AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH?

In his April 2014 priesthood session address, Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained that ultimately Christ holds all of the keys to the administration of the priesthood on earth but delegates some of them to us. In the institutional Church, "priesthood authority is governed by priesthood holders who hold priesthood keys, and ... all that is done under the direction of those priesthood keys is done with priesthood authority."⁵

While women do not currently hold priesthood keys and office, Elder Oaks asserted that both women and men are recognized as having "the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings. ... We are not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings, but what other authority can it be?" asked Elder Oaks. "When a woman—young or old—is set apart to preach the gospel as a full-time missionary, she is given priesthood authority to perform a priesthood function. The same is true when a woman is set apart to function as an officer or teacher in a Church organization under the direction of one who holds the keys of the priesthood. Whoever functions in an office or calling received from one who holds priesthood keys exercises priesthood authority in performing her or his assigned duties."

- How might women exercise priesthood authority as Elder Oaks has taught?
- What are the limitations on women's priesthood authority?
- Is recognizing that priesthood authority can be exercised by women an essential step in extending full priesthood authority to all worthy adult members of the Church?

IN ADDITION TO WOMEN'S ACCEPTED ABILITY TO ACCESS PRIESTHOOD POWER AND ACT WITH ITS AUTHORITY, WHAT ARE SOME OF MORMONISM'S MOST SPIRITUALLY COMPELLING BELIEFS THAT MANY BELIEVE SUPPORT THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN?

1. *All are alike unto God.*
2. *We have a Father and Mother in Heaven, and we can progress to be like Them.*
3. *We are co-eternal with Them.*
4. *Priesthood is necessary to eternal progression.*
5. *We have moral agency.*
6. *God continues to reveal new light and knowledge.*
7. *Others?*

HOW CAN EACH OF THESE BELIEFS RELATE TO AND SUPPORT THE EXTENSION OF PRIESTHOOD ORDINATION TO WOMEN?

All are alike unto God.

According to an official Church statement, "The Book of Mormon states, 'black and white, bond and free, male and female; ... all are alike unto God'. This is the Church's official teaching."⁶

What does it mean to say that "all are alike unto God"?

In Galatians we read, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither ... male nor female: for ye are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27-29)

- Is Christ the exemplar for all of us, regardless of sex or gender?
- What are some of the characteristics you associate with Christ?
- Are any of these characteristics exclusively male or female characteristics?

We share many characteristics, particularly as we strive to emulate Christ—compassion, love, empathy, spirituality, among many others. However, as individual women and men, we have different talents, gifts and abilities. "For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man [and woman] is given a gift by the Spirit of God." (D&C 46: 11-26)

As we learn in the scriptures, equality isn't about sameness or erasing differences between men and women or among individuals. It's about removing barriers to access, opportunity, agency and spiritual authority.

- Does an all-male priesthood impede our ability as women to use our gifts fully?
- Should differences determine whether or not women have access to a full range of opportunities for growth and service, including exercising priesthood authority and being ordained to priesthood office?

Each of us, according to our individual gifts and experience, can bring unique insights and perspectives to Church callings, service, councils and administration. Impediments to service and spiritual authority, such as an exclusively male priesthood, thwart our ability to use our gifts fully, particularly if they don't fit neatly into traditional gendered categories, and they deny everyone the fruits of those gifts. As former general Relief Society president Elaine Jack told Elder Ballard, "You know, Elder Ballard, the [women] of the Church may have some good suggestions ... if they [are] asked."⁷

We have a Father and Mother in Heaven, and we can progress to be like Them.

The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* asserts that Mormonism "accepts literally the vital scriptural teaching as worded by Paul: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' This and other scriptures underscore not only spiritual sibling relationships but heirship with God, and a destiny of joint heirship with Christ."⁸

Further, the entry continues, "as early as 1839, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught the concept of an eternal mother" as well as an eternal father. "Today the belief in a living Mother in Heaven is implicit in Latter-day Saint thought. Though the scriptures contain only hints, statements from presidents of the Church over the years indicate that human beings have a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father." They not only share parenthood but are alike in "glory, perfection, compassion, wisdom, and holiness."⁹

- What do these passages teach us about the nature of God the Father and God the Mother and Their relationship with us? With each other?

An empowered God the Mother appears to be consonant with one of Mormonism's most compelling teachings, namely, the belief in a God who wants to share power and spiritual authority with us. Essential to the LDS concept of God is that men and women see themselves in Their image and understand that we can aspire and progress to be like Them—men and women fully endowed with Their power, glory, perfection, compassion, wisdom, and holiness.

- What does it mean to be fully endowed with God's power?
- If spiritual empowerment is God's ultimate desire for us as men and women, why are women often leery of exercising power?

Some women are leery of power because it can be wielded coercively and abusively, and Mormon scripture rightly warns about its ability to corrupt: “We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men [and women], as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion” (D&C 121:39). However, exercising power is preferable to powerlessness, because having power enables us to do tremendous good, particularly if it’s used righteously—as modeled by Christ—not to coerce, but, in President Burton’s words above, “to bless, lift, comfort, strengthen” and empower others. The LDS doctrine of deity—of priesthood—teaches us that only power used to empower others is everlasting (See D&C 121: 41-46).

Unlike 12-year-old boys in the LDS Church, women have not been taught to aspire to priesthood authority or tutored in the use of priesthood power. As Elder Oaks stated, we are “not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood.” However, as a church, we are beginning again to envision women exercising the power and the authority of the priesthood.

- If women appropriately exercise the power and authority of the priesthood, why not priesthood keys and office?

Priesthood is necessary to eternal progression.

In the *Doctrine and Covenants*, we read that the power and authority of the higher priesthood is “To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant (D&C 107:18-19). According to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, “Achieving the fullness of the priesthood of the Son of God is the great goal of all faithful Latter-day Saints, because it is the power of God unto salvation and eternal lives.”¹⁰

- Is female ordination necessary for eternal progression?

We are co-eternal with Them and have moral agency to act.

While Mormonism teaches that Heavenly Father and Mother are loving, perfected beings who gave birth, in a sense, to our spirits, our essence—in Mormon terms, our intelligence—is uncreated and co-eternal with God. According to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, men and women were “in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29).

Mormons use the term “intelligence” to describe the elemental substance from which men and women’s spirits were created with the capacity to progress in knowledge and power and become like God.¹¹ Marion G. Romney, formerly of the First Presidency, explained that “... self-existing intelligence was organized [by our Heavenly Parents] into individual spirit beings.”

Because in Mormonism our essential selves are uncreated, our choices have real and profound theological consequence. We are not creatures, but co-creators with God, not only as parents, but as moral agents striving with God for a more just and equitable world.

- What does it mean to be moral agents?

We are not mere instruments in God’s hands, but co-actors with God. President Chieko Okazaki, a former member of the Relief Society General Presidency, wrote: “In most Mormon gatherings, if I were to ask who you are, particularly what your eternal identity is, many would answer, ‘I am a child of God.’ It is a beautiful answer shaped by the Primary song we have learned and loved for two generations. But that is not enough. Every living person is a child of God. But that’s ... not the ending point. The ending point is to become peers of God, friends of God, coworkers of God, adults of God.”¹²

Moral agency requires us to make choices and take responsibility for those choices. As moral agents, we can remain silent and inert, or we can choose to embrace a moral activism that requires us to work with God for goodness, justice and equality (See D&C 93: 29-31).

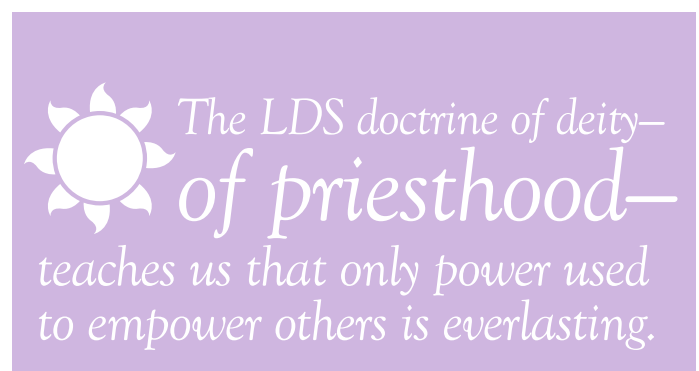
- What does it mean, as President Okazaki said, to be an “adult of God”?
- What does having moral agency require of us?

God continues to reveal new light and knowledge.

Among the strengths of Mormonism is the belief that the heavens are yet open. The Ninth Article of Faith asserts that God “will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.” As we obtain more light and knowledge, our institutions and policies should reflect that increased wisdom. Church members can play a part in this process. We ask questions and articulate the need for revelation.

According to President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “... if we stop asking questions, stop thinking, stop pondering, we can thwart the revelations of the spirit. Remember, it was the questions young Joseph asked that opened the door for the restoration of all things. ... How often has the Holy Spirit tried to tell us something we needed to know, but couldn’t get past the massive, iron gate of what we thought we already knew.”¹³

Discussion Four will focus more in depth on our role in the process of revelation.



ORDAIN WOMEN SCRIPTURE STUDY CHART

ALL OF US ARE EQUAL IN GOD'S SIGHT

- 2 Nephi 26:33** Male and female, all are alike unto God
- Galatians 3:27-29** There is neither male nor female: ye are one in Christ.
- Acts 10:34** God is no respecter of persons

WE HAVE A FATHER AND MOTHER IN HEAVEN, AND WE CAN PROGRESS TO BE LIKE THEM.

- D&C 14:7** The Greatest Gift
- Moses 1:39** Immortality and Eternal Life
- Psalms 82:6** Children of the Most High
- Romans 8:16-16** We are all heirs

WE ARE CO-ETERNAL WITH OUR HEAVENLY PARENTS

- Abraham 3:22-28** Organized Intelligences
- D&C 93:29** Intelligence was not created nor made

PRIESTHOOD IS NECESSARY TO ETERNAL PROGRESSION

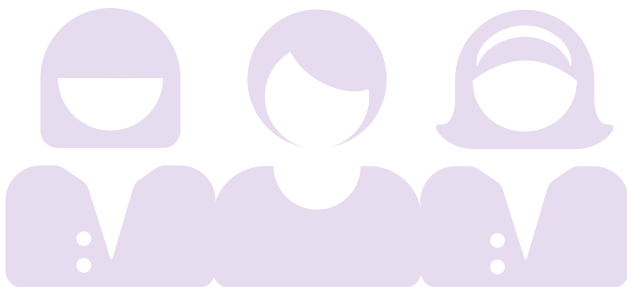
- D&C 84: 35-39** Priesthood brings exaltation
- D&C 121: 36** Connected to powers of heaven
- D&C 107:18-19** Commune with God via priesthood

WE HAVE MORAL AGENCY

- D&C 93:30** All truth is independent...to act for itself
- Moroni 7:19** Lay hold upon every good thing
- Articles of Faith 1:13** We seek after these things
- D&C 58:26-27** Be anxiously engaged in a good cause

GOD CONTINUES TO REVEAL NEW LIGHT AND KNOWLEDGE

- Articles of Faith 1:9** God will yet reveal many great and important things
- Articles of Faith 1:6** Prophets and apostles
- Amos 3:7** God reveals changes through the prophet



SCRIPTURE READINGS

2 Nephi 26:33

For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.

Galatians 3:27-29

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Acts 10:34

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

D&C 14:7

And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Moses 1:39

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

Psalms 82:6

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

Romans 8:16-17

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Abraham 3:22-23

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;
23 And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

D&C 93:29

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

D&C 84: 35-39

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

39 And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

D&C 121: 36

That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

D&C 107:18-19

18 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

Articles of Faith 1:9

We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

D&C 93:30

All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

Moroni 7:19

Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.

Articles of Faith 1:13

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

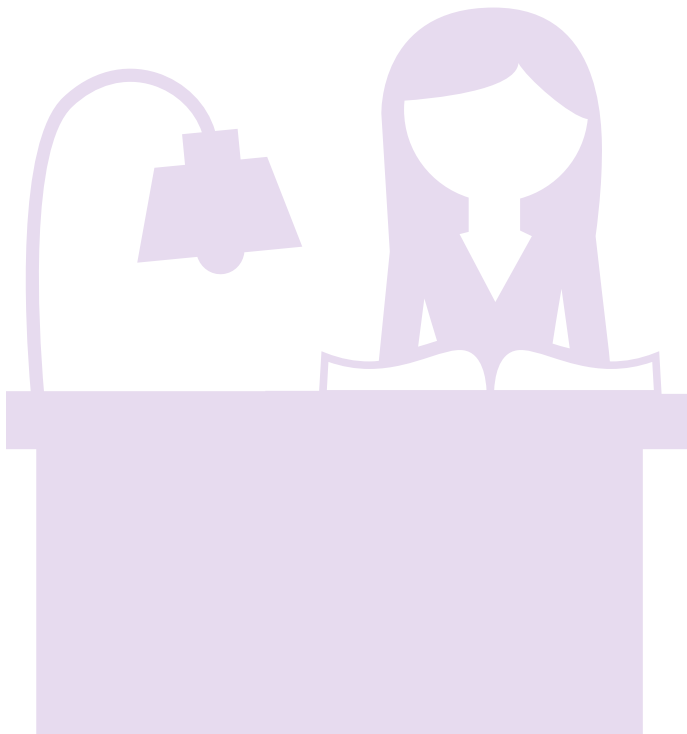
D&C 58:26-27

26 For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

27 Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness

D&C 8:2

Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.



SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES:

The following are recommended for participants who would like to follow up the discussion with continued personal study.

SCRIPTURES

Mark 2,

Ether 2,

D&C Sections 4, 20, 25, 84, 107, 121

ARTICLES

Nadine Hansen, “Women and Priesthood”

http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V14N04_50.pdf

Linda King Newell, “A gift given: A gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the sick among Mormon Women”

<https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/115-6-30-43.pdf>

David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, “A Mother There: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven”

<https://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFViewer.aspx?title=8669&linkURL=50.1PaulsenPulidoMother482bf17d-bbc5-4530-a7cc1a1b7e5b079.pdf>

Margaret Merrill Toscano, “Put on Your Strength O Daughters of Zion: Claiming Priesthood and Knowing the Mother”

<http://signaturebookslibrary.org/?p=1353>

Linda P. Wilcox, “The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven”

<http://signaturebookslibrary.org/?p=925>

NOTES

- ¹ Linda K. Burton, “Priesthood Power—Available to All,” *Ensign*, June 2014. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2014/06/priesthood-power-available-to-all?lang=eng>
- ² See *Nauwoo Relief Society Minute Book* (excerpted in Discussion Two)
- ³ *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*, pg. 127. Intellectual Reserve, 2012. available at https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/06500_eng.pdf; and “Priesthood,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, available at <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Priesthood>
- ⁴ Neil A. Andersen, “Power in the Priesthood,” October 2013 available at <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/power-in-the-priesthood?lang=eng>
- ⁵ Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” April 2014, available at <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/the-keys-and-authority-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng>
- ⁶ “Race and the Church: All Are Alike unto God,” available at <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/race-church>
- ⁷ Andersen, *ibid.*
- ⁸ “Mother in Heaven,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, available at http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Mother_in_Heaven; see also Romans 8:16-18
- ⁹ “Priesthood,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, *ibid.*
- ¹⁰ “Priesthood,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, available at <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Priesthood>
- ¹¹ Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 353-54
- ¹² Chieko Okazaki, *Being Enough*, pg. 61
- ¹³ February 2012 Leadership Training Broadcast, available at <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/worldwide-leadership-training/2012/01/acting-on-the-truths-of-the-gospel-of-jesus-christ>