

# Male Allies

## Conversation Seven



ORDAIN WOMEN



## MALE ALLIES

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“When I ran away from slavery, it was for myself; when I advocated emancipation, it was for my people; but when I stood up for the rights of women, self was out of the question, and I found a little nobility in the act.”

-Frederick Douglass



## CONVERSATION SEVEN READINGS

Participants should prepare beforehand by reading the following articles and scriptures:

- *Mormon Male Privilege*, Mark Barnes
- *Women Are People, Too (Myths about Women and Gender Roles)*, based on research and lectures of Michael J. Stevens
- *Do It for Charlie*, Sean Carter
- *Mormon Male Privilege and How to Make Apparent Gender Disparity in the Church*, Chelsea Shields Strayer
- *Who's the Captain of the Ally-Ship?*, Kate Kelly Exponent II Blog
- 2 Nephi 26
- Mosiah 18
- Matthew 5

## REVIEW

In Conversation Six, we discussed ways we can embody the changes we would like to see in the Church. In the limited polling that has been done, statistics show that more Mormon men than Mormon women support female ordination. Conversation Seven is specifically directed to men who are learning to be better male allies in the struggle for gender equality in the Church. We hope you will go through this conversation with other men – in person or online – and share your thoughts with many others. This conversation is one way you can “be the change,” helping other men realize how gender equality in the Church is a moral imperative that can benefit them and their families.

## CONVERSATION SEVEN

# ACTIVITY

## PRIVILEGE BASKETBALL

Ideally, this game is played in a large room or gym/cultural hall. Everyone stands on one side of the room. The group leader reads through the list below and group members take one step forward for every item that applies to them. The person who moves the farthest across the room wins. (Alternatively, the players can place a coin on the table in front of them, for each applicable item.) In case of a tie, the person holding the highest office (present or past) or who served the longest will be declared the winner.

*I have SAID these phrases in the past:*

- “You don’t need to worry about the details, sisters.”
- “We need priesthood holders for the activity to take place.”
- “While in conference with the stake presidency and high council members...”
- “I bring you the love of the stake presidency/bishopric.”
- “The Relief Society will be passing around a sign-up sheet for the food/dishes to bring.”
- “I’d like to thank the priesthood for...” (e.g., “I’d like to thank the Priesthood for their reverence in passing the sacrament”)
- “Thank you, sisters, for your sacrifices; we would be lost without your selfless service.”
- “It is my privilege to open this meeting with...” (emphasis ours)
- “I will now set apart...”
- (Speaking to a girl/woman) “It is important for you to be modest to help keep the Young Men’s thoughts clean.”
- “I would like to call on \_\_\_\_\_ to say the prayer.”
- “Don’t worry about polygamy, sister. It will be sorted out in the next life.”
- “My wife has to go out, so I am babysitting the kids tonight.”
- “We’ve discussed it as priesthood leaders and we think you should...”

*I have EXPERIENCED these scenarios:*

- I listened to leaders try to explain why the YM/Scouting budget is higher than YW/ Activity Days budget, or I watched this disparity be accepted without question.
- At a priesthood leadership meeting, a speaker told us how important we are as priesthood holders, explaining that we were foreordained to do great things because we were valiant in the preexistence.
- As a missionary, I was told to focus on converting men, because priesthood holders are important to the growth of the ward/stake.
- As a young man I was told that a beautiful wife would be my “reward” for being righteous and obeying the commandments.
- In a mixed-gender instructional setting, I was taught about the blessings of exercising the priesthood, which is only available to those of my own gender (e.g., the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood).
- In a leadership setting, my opinion was listened to while a woman’s was ignored.
- I know of a wedding where a man was sealed to his second wife.
- My father took me aside to explain the responsibilities and honor of the priesthood.

- Ward leaders regularly thanked me publicly for the service I provided.
- I received public recognition, awards, and celebrations as I advanced through Church programs, Scouting ranks, or priesthood office ordinations.
- I received training to prepare me for my future in Church leadership and missionary work.

*I have DONE these things:*

- I blessed my baby without my wife’s involvement.
- I was asked to attend a Relief Society or YW activity because they couldn’t proceed without a priesthood holder present.
- I set apart my son and or daughter when they received callings in YM/YW.
- I blessed and passed the sacrament.
- I ordained my son to the priesthood.
- I baptized my child.
- I confirmed my child.
- I gave blessings of comfort and healing.
- I baptized a convert.
- I confirmed a convert.
- I gave my permission, before a priesthood leader extended a calling to my wife.
- I counseled a woman using The Family: A Proclamation to the World as authority to support gender roles.
- I spoke about gender roles to a group of women or girls.
- I was an official witness at a Temple sealing.
- I served as a temple worker, despite having children under 18.
- I approved or oversaw the approval of decisions made for women’s programs/organizations, in which I do not participated.
- I conducted a worthiness interview (temple recommend, convert baptism, etc.).
- I presided over a meeting (sacrament meeting, baptismal service, mission district meeting, etc.)
- I gave a blessing to a person, whom I do not know.
- I have been asked to participate in a priesthood ordinance, without verifying my worthiness.
- I received a letter addressed to me from a local Church leader, which was meant for my wife.
- I began a sacrament talk by praising my wife for her superior virtue.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*How did this activity make you feel?*

*What did you think about as you advanced through the game?*

*What are some other manifestations of male privilege?*

## WHAT IS AN ALLY?

In the context of Ordain Women, a male ally is a man who joins with women to work toward gender equality. Within Ordain Women, this specifically means that we are men who are committed to and work toward the goal of “Equality and Ordination to the Priesthood” in the LDS Church regardless of gender. While women bear the brunt of the negative consequences of patriarchy, it is harmful to us all. As male allies we have the opportunity to help transform the system, and create an institution where men and women operate with parity. We believe that this is in accordance with our limitless nature as children of Heavenly Parents.

## WHY BECOME AN ALLY?

Being a man who desires to join the struggle for equality in the Church suggests you see other human beings as more than their physical characteristics and you seek to connect with others at their spiritual core, where “all are alike unto God.” You are inspired by the respect and inclusion Jesus Christ demonstrated to the women around Him.

One male ally tells of an epiphany he had several years ago, while sitting in fast and testimony meeting. “As I listened to the testimonies, I noticed that testimonies fell into different categories. There were testimonies I called ‘beatitude testimonies,’ which focused on love, kindness and helping others. In contrast, some members’ testimonies talked about authority, punishment and being God’s chosen people.” Those whose testimonies fall in this first category are likely to enjoy working as an ally.

Does your heart soar when you read the beatitudes, think about the “Good Samaritan,” or recognize that the greatest two commandments are to love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself? If so, you will find great joy in working as an ally. For allies, happiness comes from understanding we are all connected and from working toward making the world a better place for everyone.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*Have you ever been an ally in other contexts? How did that make you feel?*

*Please share as a group times when you’ve seen the need for ally work.*

*Why do you personally want to be a male ally?*

*What do you like or dislike about the term “ally”?*

## BENEFITS OF SERVING AS AN ALLY

Being a male ally will change you. It will allow you to see the world in a very different way. Serving as an ally can give you an opportunity to listen to – and attempt to empathize with the experiences of women in the Church, study pure doctrine free from cultural imposition, and grapple with sexism – including the sexism within our own religious community.

You will also have opportunities to publicly stand up and be counted. Speaking truth to power can be a frightening experience for anyone. It certainly was not easy for Abinadi, Paul or Isaiah. Many supporters of Ordain Women have paid a high price for their support, but standing up for equality is also very liberating. There may be no better feeling in the world than knowing when it mattered, you were able to do the right thing, despite substantial pressure to remain silent. To this end, Paul declared that he was “not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” (Romans 1:16) and Joseph Smith declared that “though [he] was hated and persecuted” for telling about his vision, “it was true” and he had to share it (Joseph Smith – History 1:25, see 1:22-25). So too, when you gain a testimony of gender equality you will also find joy in declaring this truth: “male and female... are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33) so that “neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11).

So much of what we do and become in life can be driven by the expectations imposed on us because of gender. These role expectations are harmful to both women and men. They limit our ability to form authentic relationships, because we bring in preconceived ideas based on stereotypes. Too often we see the role and not the real person standing in front of us. This includes the person who we see when we look in the mirror.

## BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

One of our primary roles as male allies is to help other men become more egalitarian. Like us, they grew up in a patriarchal system and will likely see inequality as natural. Privilege tends to be invisible until someone points it out. As men who understand patriarchy and privilege, we can be effective at educating others. As male allies in a women’s movement, we are most effective in supporting roles. An important function of a women’s movement is for women to emerge as strong leaders and role models. We must be conscious of our supportive roles and avoid thinking that we need to “take the lead” or be the “face of the movement.”

Remember that being an ally is not an identity, but a set of behaviors. Focus on supporting, empowering and standing up for women instead of leading and deciding where you think they should go. Stick up for equality and stick up for the women around you. When you slip into old patterns that reinforce a patriarchal system, do not get defensive. Apologize as necessary

and recommit to good ally behavior knowing that mistakes are human and not a threat to your character. Keep in mind that your privilege is like having the wind at your back as you sail through life. Respect the accomplishments of women, who face many of your same challenges, without the benefits of privilege.

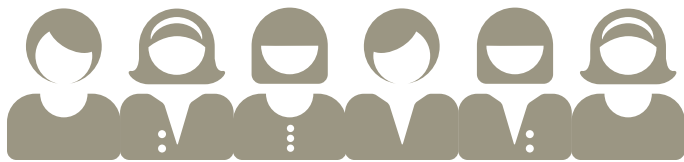
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Have you ever been in a supporting role at work or in a relationship?*

*What did that feel like, and how can you apply it to religious settings?*

*How has Mormon male privilege benefited you?*

*What benefits directly relate to priesthood ordination in our Church?*



## LIST OF GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING IN FEMINIST SPACES

Many men entering female-dominated spaces worry they will say something that will be received badly. You may worry about stepping on toes or saying the wrong thing. This experience can help you develop empathy for how women often feel in male-dominated spaces. Here are some guidelines:

Enter this space accepting that male privilege and gender inequality exist. You did not cause inequality and you did not ask for male privilege. Inequality and privilege are facts that impact and affect interactions of all who operate in a patriarchal system.

Drop notions of how individuals “should be” in this space. You will encounter people in all stages along their own spiritual journeys. You will meet people with widely varying backgrounds, cultures, sexual orientations, etc. This is a place to learn to accept. It is not a place to prescribe.

Sexual harassment can severely damage this space. Listen to women when they establish boundaries and always, always, always seek consent for any type of engagement. If you are at all unsure how to interpret a comment... ask!

This space is not about you. You are not the protagonist in the story. (And that’s okay!) As an ally, you are here to give support and encourage women to take the lead. In our Mormon culture, men are frequently taught that they always have the authority to speak. Too often, it is the job of Mormon women to support men and make them feel comfortable. This is not the case in this space. You are here as an ally to support women, make them feel comfortable, and defer to the authority of their experience.

Do not be dismissive of the feelings of others. If you make a mistake and hurt another person’s feelings, be quick to apologize and move forward. Do not try to justify your behavior. We are all learning to be good allies. Humility is the best policy.

Do not monopolize a conversation. Focus on listening first and speaking second. This does not mean that you should not speak, but it does mean that as a man you must be careful to check your privilege and not inhibit (or aggressively dominate) the conversation. You may be used to being listened to and having your opinions valued. In this space, as men are not the experts, we can learn a great deal. We can do a lot of good, but we will never know what it is really like to be a woman in a patriarchal system.

See others as individuals. Do not make assumptions about others based on stereotypes. If you are confused, ask questions.

Question your gut feelings. We have all been conditioned to the gender roles in our culture. Violations of these gender roles can create emotional responses, which we feel in our gut. Even the most dedicated male ally may, from time to time, feel such an emotional response. Before reacting, carefully question the source of your feeling.

Real respect does not include putting someone on a pedestal. Excessive, generalized, hollow or undue praise can also be damaging. Speak to both women and men as your equals. You are neither above nor below anyone else in this space.

Women are not responsible for your thoughts. Learn to see each person, male and female, as a unique child of God. Avoid making comments about the appearance of women in feminist spaces, even if they are positive comments.

Recognize that women face gender-based violence, which is rarely encountered by men. There are times when past violence can have an impact on a woman’s participation. In some circumstances, the best way to be a male ally is to humbly leave the space or disengage from the conversation.

Don’t take it personally. If a comment is made about “men generally” it is not targeted at you. If a comment does not describe you, it is not about you. You should train yourself to recognize this and resist any urge to mount a defense. Everyone already understands from the work you do in this space that you are on the right side. Arguing that “not all men” do X, Y or Z is not helpful or enlightening.

Humility is the best policy. None of us is perfect. We all make mistakes in this space. If you meet with a rebuke, be introspective. Use the situation to learn how to do better.

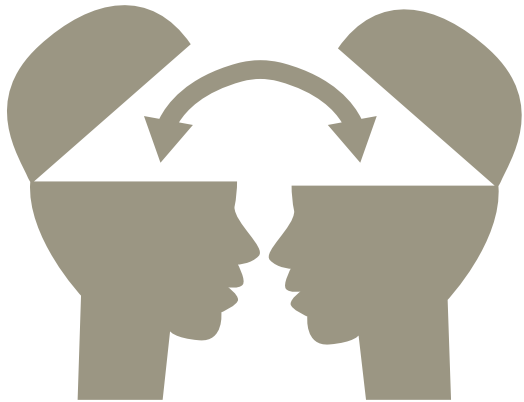
Educate yourself. This is a very busy space, with a lot to be done. People will assume that you have an understanding of history, feminist theory, social movements, Mormon theology, etc. Take the time to study. Do not expect the women in this space to teach you. There are numerous valuable sources for this information. Feel free to request guidance, but take responsibility for your own education. You will be more effective and find the experience more fulfilling if you have done your homework.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*Why is it important to have rules, boundaries and guidelines for men in feminist spaces?*

*What are some ways you have found to engage in feminist conversations?*

*Can you think of a time you have made a misstep regarding women's issues? How did it feel? How did you move past it?*



## HOW TO BECOME AN ALLY

Having reached the end of this conversation, we hope that you would like to become an Ordain Women Male Ally. First, we acknowledge and thank all of those men who function as male allies online, at Ordain Women actions, in their wards and workplaces, and in all aspects of their daily lives. We have been blessed to have thousands of people, who are not formally a part of Ordain Women, advocate for this cause. Your contribution toward equality within the Church is very important.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*1. Now that we are learning to recognize the ways in which male privilege affects our lives, what do we do with this information? Please split up into smaller groups and have each group provide specifics about how to accomplish one of the bullet points listed below:*

- *Use the leadership benefits of your privilege to influence and teach others about gender inequality, especially those in your same privilege group (e.g., priesthood holders).*
- *Financially support gender equality.*
- *Volunteer with women-focused organizations.*

- *Use the authority benefits of your privilege to enact greater gender equality wherever you can.*
- *Use leadership positions in a ward or stake to reach out to women to see what changes they would like to see at the local level.*
- *Concerning the young women in your life, such as daughters, nieces, friends, or students, how can you integrate and include them in the same ways that young men are integrated and included in the Church.*

*2. How can you use your male privilege to alter the status quo?*

## IF YOU WISH TO FORMALLY BECOME AN OW MALE ALLY, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

- 1. Submit a profile to Ordain Women. The instructions for submitting a profile are found at: <http://ordainwomen.org/submit/>*
- 2. Join the Supporters of Ordain Women Facebook group. You will automatically receive an invitation, once your profile is published on the Ordain Women website. [ordainwomen.org/](http://ordainwomen.org/)*
- 3. Join the OW Male Ally Committee. Contact Mark Barnes via Facebook message, or email [info@ordainwomen.org](mailto:info@ordainwomen.org) to tell him you are interested in serving as a male ally.*
- 4. Engage in daily acts of bravery. If someone makes a sexist comment, challenge it. This does not need to be rude; simply explain why the comment is problematic. Likewise, when you see sexist practices, point them out. There are always plenty of opportunities to help educate others and improve our culture. The bottom line is that we cannot leave it to others to do this work. We are taught that this life is a test of our integrity and willingness to serve to others. Let us be examples of bravery and equality to all the other men with whom we interact.*

# READINGS

## MORMON MALE PRIVILEGE

*Mark Barnes*

Mormon male privilege stems from the fact that the Mormon leadership hierarchy is a patriarchy. Patriarchy literally means, “rule by fathers.” It has existed in most civilizations for centuries. It has persisted in many religious traditions because some of the Bible’s narratives encourage it. For example: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (1 Tim 2:12 KJV).”<sup>1</sup> Today, the word patriarchy describes a system (not a group of people), in which men hold most or all the power. Patriarchy ≠ men. Patriarchy = a hierarchical system in which men are placed in positions of power over women. Generally speaking, patriarchy privileges men over women.<sup>2</sup>

Like most power structures, the system of patriarchy seeks to perpetuate itself. Those in charge of the system did not design the system. However, they have benefitted by conforming to the system. While patriarchy generally grants men greater access to power and privilege, it can also attack men who challenge its authority.

To most of us, our privilege is invisible unless we make an effort to understand it. Like other positions of privilege, recognizing the ways in which we, as Mormon men, often inhibit and discourage women from reaching their potential can be difficult. Because privilege grants status and greater access to resources, those who do not experience this form of privilege are disadvantaged – financially, emotionally and socially. It is important to note that Mormon men generally try to be Christ-like in their relationships with women. For this reason the type of patriarchy found in the Church is often called “benevolent patriarchy.” Most men are not intentionally trying to subjugate and undermine women, but they participate in a system that does. It is this systemic nature of privilege that can make it so difficult to identify when living within a patriarchal system. The following are examples of male privilege found in Mormonism.

To the extent women in the church have status, it is because of their relationship to a man with status. One symptom of this problem is the small number of positive female role models found in the scriptures. Nephi’s wife... (what’s her name?) is a classic example. She is just a wife. She has no name worth mentioning. Unfortunately, we cannot simply dismiss her example as a product of her time. Within Mormonism today, we still define women by their relationships to men. A woman married to a mission president is set-apart as a “mission president’s wife.” Likewise, a woman married to a temple president is a “temple matron.” Many of the most revered women in the Church today have status, because they are married to general authorities. With few notable exceptions, the women of status in the church derive their status from their relationships to powerful men.

General conference is another example. Men attend, preside over, and give keynote addresses at the general women’s session. But, women are not permitted to attend general priesthood

sessions at the Conference Center, let alone participate. Ubiquitous male leadership makes members expect men to lead in all circumstances, even though many women may feel more comfortable being led and counseled by a woman. Conversely, ubiquitous male leadership places women in subjugated positions by denying them any legitimate access to independent authority. This situation makes some women hesitant to express their opinions. Often they do not expect to have their opinions valued in the same way as those expressed by men.

Even if men alone hold the priesthood, there are many positions of leadership that do not require the ability to perform ordinances, such as Sunday School president and ward clerk. Currently, women may not deal with finances at any level of the Church. When a woman does have a position of authority, like Relief Society president, she is commonly referred to as “Sister” Johnson instead of “President” Johnson, whereas men who are presidents are given the title “president.” which they usually retain even after they are released. Male leaders preside over all female auxiliary leaders in the Church and often must give their permission before women can perform their duties. Auxiliaries led by men receive less oversight. The system of Church discipline is also entirely presided over by men. (See the excellent series by April Young Bennett at Exponent II, <http://www.the-exponent.com/church-discipline-women-disciplined-by-men/>.)

In their religious lives, LDS women are relegated to the role of mother, while men can be fathers, priesthood holders, and are encouraged to pursue higher education and lucrative careers. The most public portion of a baby’s birth in the church is the all-male ritual of a baby blessing, where the mother is excluded from the blessing ordinance. Likewise, female temple workers cannot keep their positions if they have children younger than eighteen years old living in their home. This same rule does not apply to male temple workers.

As time has passed in the Mormon Church, women have seen their autonomy restricted rather than enhanced in significant ways. As women in many countries have made strides toward equality with men, in the LDS Church women have lost ground. For years, the Relief Society operated autonomously, raised its own money, managed its own finances, and even published its own magazines and curriculum. This authority began to decline in the early twentieth century as male priesthood authorities pressured the Relief Society to give up some of its autonomy. A publication associated with the Relief Society and run by Emmeline B. Wells, *Woman’s Exponent*, ceased publication, the male leadership of the Church confiscated and sold Relief Society’s massive store of grain,<sup>3</sup> and the practice of lifetime tenure for Relief Society presidents came to an end. While both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young served as presidents of the Church, women regularly washed, anointed with oil, and performed blessings for healing the sick. During this early era, it was uncommon to find a woman who did not perform blessings. Unfortunately another blow to female autonomy came in 1946, when women’s healing blessings were prohibited – not by revelation, but by a memorandum drafted by Joseph Fielding Smith, then of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.<sup>4</sup>



Gender disparities in the Church start when girls are young and impressionable, and are forming their own worldviews. Girls as young as age eight see the boys become Cub Scouts and engage in activities with much larger budgets than the authorized Activity Days program. Disparity in resources for activities continues through the Scouting program, while the Young Women programs receive much less funding in the average ward. Many Mormon girls grow up thinking it is normal and acceptable for boys to get more, do more, and even be more. Many Mormon girls internalize this treatment. This makes it harder to change the system, because these girls often come to see their subordinate roles as natural and even defend the system. In doing so, they sometimes unwittingly create an environment where girls who would like to engage on more equal footing with their male counterparts are silenced. In some cases, these girls feel marginalized and leave church activity by the time they are young adults. This system of internalized sexism and resistance to change on the part of the institution has been so effective that not one woman was allowed to pray in general conference until the spring of 2013.

Mormon male privilege extends to the holiest of Mormon ceremonies in the temple. There, women covenant to hearken unto their husbands while the husbands covenant to hearken to God. As Elder John D. Charles has said, temple goers receive a sacred new name that women have to share with their husbands but that men are instructed never to share with their wives. Though polygamy is no longer practiced, the doctrine has not been rescinded. In the modern LDS Church, a temple-married man whose wife is deceased can be sealed to another woman for time and all eternity without canceling prior sealings. Women, on the other hand, can be sealed for eternity to only one man. If her husband dies, she cannot be sealed to another man, ever. In other words, in the eternities, many Mormon men still expect to have more than one wife. The very fact that we practiced polygamy and still have current teachings that polygamy will be practiced in heaven, puts men above women. While the specifics of Mormon polygamy doctrine seem unique, the use of women as a reward in a patriarchal system is very common.<sup>5</sup>

When all these examples of male privilege are combined throughout the life of a Mormon boy, he may expect more automatic deference than his female counterparts. He is encouraged to be a leader, and to make choices for a fulfilling life, based on his own personal desires.

By contrast, women are encouraged to take the path of motherhood and dependence on a man for their temporal, spiritual and eternal needs. When women pursue higher education, they are often encouraged to major in areas that will enhance their skills in the home, and to end their studies or leave their profession once they marry and have children. This leaves Mormon women who follow this path with fewer opportunities for growth beyond motherhood and with fewer abilities and resources to deal with the challenges of life independent of a male partner.

## WOMEN ARE PEOPLE TOO (MYTHS ABOUT WOMEN AND GENDER ROLES)

*Based on research and lectures of Michael J. Stevens*

A sociotype is formed when a group is researched and aggregated to determine a group average. Sociotypes, when accurate, are not bad. They are studied by, for example, marketing firms to aid in appealing to a target demographic. However, sociotypes can be inaccurate, and sociotypes can never be universally applied to all individuals within a demographic, or to any specific individual within a demographic. To do so is stereotyping.

Elder Russell Ballard, in a devotional address on March 31, 2001, addressing women said “You are natural born nurturers.”<sup>6</sup> This is a message we hear in the Church. We are taught that men are or are expected to be strong, stoic, emotionally stable, providers who “preside over their homes in righteousness.”

Research has shown that, on average, as a group, women, in some cases, have slightly higher scores in some areas that would be associated with “nurturing.” But, for those same attributes, the range of scores has a high degree of overlap between the genders. In addition, many people consider themselves to be gender fluid, transgender or gender queer. Distributing strict roles and attributes based on sex hurts everyone.

This rigidity hurts both men and women, by robbing individuals of the ability to explore roles that are outside what is considered typical for their gender, but which are, in fact, a gift that would be a strength for that individual.

In Matthew 5:3-9, Jesus gave us the Beatitudes. He began each verse with “blessed are the...” and listed the poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, those that hunger after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace makers. These traits are gifts of the Spirit. The Savior is addressing a crowd of both women and men. But, he did not use gender-specific language. In this way Jesus taught us that gifts of the Spirit are universal. They are not given to a particular gender.

It is not acceptable to say “Women are...” or “Men are...” in describing personal attributes. At best, we may be able to say “in my experience, on average, men tend to express this trait...” And, even then we have to be careful about whether we are applying an accurate, measurable sociotype, or whether we are simply repeating a poorly conceived stereotype.

In the same BYU devotional, Elder Russell Ballard said, “We don’t need women who want to be like men, sound like men, dress like men, drive like some men drive, or act like men.” The characteristics to which he refers are not the ways that categorically “men act.” They are the ways that we often stereotype the way that men act. Throughout the world, men and women both wear shirts and pants most days, are not distinguishable from one another in the way they drive, and speak the same languages.

It is important for individuals to act as individuals, and to develop, embrace and strengthen each person’s gifts, strengths and talents. To assume, based on a certain innate characteristic – such as sex, race, ethnicity, height or weight – that a person

must adopt a certain role or match a stereotypical persona is to deny God's power to endow each of us with unique gifts.

In an essay entitled "It's Not All about Money,"<sup>7</sup> April Young Bennett addresses the idea that women should work outside the home only when there is a specific need for money (e.g., there is no man in the house, or the husband is not able to make enough money). Bennett discusses research related to "motivation-hygiene theory," which found that in many cases, money is not the primary motivation to work. Bennett describes her experience of finding fulfillment in work outside the home. She argues that lack of personal fulfillment can lead to relationship problems with a spouse or with children.

Instead of seeing women and men as bound within rigid roles, it is important that we look at each individual, and see what strengths she or he brings to the table, or how his or her gifts can be used to best serve the Lord.

## DO IT FOR CHARLIE!

*By: Sean Carter,*

*Ordain Women's Social Media Committee.*

Several people have asked why I have chosen to be an ally to the Ordain Women movement. My answer is always the same - "I'm doing it for Charlie." Let me explain.

A few years ago, my travels as a legal humorist brought me to Hot Springs, Arkansas. As with any town that has a hot spring running underneath it, the people of Hot Springs are very excited about their hot water. In fact, I got the distinct impression that they were unaware that other cities had found a way to accomplish this modern miracle because complete strangers would stop me on the street and practically insist that I enjoy one of their hot springs baths. And despite the fact that I normally only bathe on Saturdays, they had worn me down by Thursday of that week and therefore, I reluctantly made an appointment at the Arlington Hotel Spa.

Upon arrival, I was greeted by Charlie, who explained that he would be my "attendant." He handed me a robe, a towel and a pair of slippers and asked me to follow him. We went into a small room that simply consisted of a large metal tub and a wooden stool. Charlie turned the knob on the tub's faucet and out poured water from the hot spring.

As it churned and bubbled in the tub, I shouted to Charlie, "That looks really good. I think I am going to enjoy this."

He shouted back, "I believe you will, Mr. Carter."

For the next ten minutes, we repeated this conversation several times because after each such repetition, I expected Charlie to depart the room, so that I could disrobe and hop into the tub. Sensing my frustration, Charlie finally explained that he would "attend" to me during the bath, as that was part of the "Deluxe Package" I had charged to my hotel room bill.

Now, you will find this hard to believe, but up until that point in my adult life, I had not been bathed by a complete stranger. In fact, I wasn't even sure of the proper etiquette or protocol.

Being in the south, I suspected that it consisted of talking about sports, bass fishing and elk hunting, but I didn't know for sure. What I do know for sure is that you're not going to be able to ignore a "stranger bath" altogether and you will talk to this person about something.

Needless to say, Charlie and I became fast friends. One thing that aided in our bonding process was the fact that he was an African American gentleman about my father's age. As we became better acquainted, I learned that he was not originally from Hot Springs, but rather Little Rock, Arkansas. As I did the math in my head, I realized that he was likely in Little Rock at the time of that epic school desegregation struggle. Out of curiosity, I asked if he was part of that movement and he confirmed that he had graduated from Central High School a few years after those brave little boys and girls had first entered under the protection of armed federal troops and the Arkansas National Guard.

I quickly became sick to my stomach because I realized that my spa experience was all wrong. I was the one who should be bathing Charlie. It is because of his courage that I am able to travel the country, charging spa packages to the organizers of the events at which I speak. In fact, I owe everything that I have to Charlie and the thousands of nameless and faceless people who were willing to face down angry mobs, police dogs and water cannons to fight for the rights of equal access to transportation and places of public accommodation that I so often take for granted.

And so I resolved right then and there, that I would pay back their sacrifice in either one of two ways. I could either run around the country bathing old black men. Or alternatively, I could "pay forward" their efforts by lending my assistance in the fundamental work of humanity - the progressive elimination of the distinction between us and them. For now, I've decided to go with Option #2 - to work towards equality for all of God's children and what better place to start than in our beloved church?

And while the sisters of OW certainly don't need my assistance as a man in this Church, I think that my experience as a black man in this Church could provide a helpful perspective, particularly for our beloved brothers and sisters who have yet to grasp the need for gender equality in the Church. After all, less than 40 years ago, I would have been denied not only the priesthood, but even the blessings of the temple. And while this is something that we have tried to forget as saints, the rest of the world has not forgotten it; particularly black Americans.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm currently African American. In fact, I've been black almost my entire life (I don't usually count the five years that I lived in Boston). And not only am I black, but the same is true for both of my parents. In short, I was raised in a predominately black household. Furthermore, some of my very best friends are black. In short, I know A LOT of black people. And without exception, they were all shocked that I joined the LDS Church four years ago.

I've undergone quite a few "interrogations" over my conversion. Interestingly, none of my inquisitors asked questions about the

reliability of the Book of Mormon or the validity of our claims to the Restoration. In fact, very few of them had even heard of Joseph Smith and most thought that Brigham Young was the son of founder of Brigham's Ice Cream in New England. However, every one of my friends and family knew about the priesthood and temple ban, and that our church was pretty much the last church in the modern world to get the memo on equality. As a result, just about every one of these interrogations started with, "But I thought Mormons didn't like black people?," "How could you join such a racist church?," and of course, "Why are you still drinking Diet Coke?"

I've come to realize that this isn't an issue that white saints are often confronted with because people are usually too courteous to ask them such questions. A decent person simply doesn't ask someone, "So why were your parents and grandparents such racists?" Instead, a decent person (or alternatively, one of my friends and family) will reserve that question for me. After all, it wasn't my ancestors who were doing the oppressing, so I'm less likely to be offended by the inquiry.

Of course, over four years, I've learned ways to deflect the question. "Now, come on, let's be fair now. The LDS Church changed its policies in 1978. And sure, that was a good 15 years after passage of the Civil Rights Act, but it was only in the fourth season of *The Jeffersons*. By the time they replaced the other Lionel with the good Lionel, the LDS Church was fully on board with racial equality." As you might expect, this approach has yet to be successful in easing their suspicions about the church, but it has resulted in some interesting debates on which actor was the better Lionel.

In all seriousness, despite the fact that it has been almost four decades since the lifting of the ban, most people of African descent still see us as "that racist church." As a result, they are about as likely to consider our message of the Restored Gospel as George Jefferson was likely to consider opening up a dry cleaning store with Archie Bunker. Tragically, millions of God's children will likely have to wait for the hereafter to consider the fullness of the Gospel. This is something that we saints need to seriously consider in connection with the issue of ordaining women, because we run the same risk of being remembered as "that sexist church" 40 years from now.

The rest of the world is inching closer and closer to gender equality. Every year, more women assume roles as CEOs, university presidents and even military generals. In fact, at present, the person most likely to be the next President of the United States is a woman. In such an event, our current priesthood restriction is going to look downright absurd. I certainly don't want to be the one trying to explain to my mother how a woman can be the single most important figure on planet earth, but the Lord can't trust her to pass out bread and water on a Sunday morning.

And while many of our brothers and sisters sincerely believe that we must wait on the Lord to make changes in His Church, it's likely that He is waiting on us. In response to members of the Christian community who were asking him to be patient in waiting for civil rights, Dr. King replied:

"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom."

It seems to me that we must do our part and struggle to get ourselves mentally and spiritually prepared for the inevitable ordination of women. In the Church's most recent essay on the priesthood ban, it speculates that perhaps one of the reasons that it took so long for the Brethren to receive the 1978 revelation was because the saints weren't ready for racial equality.

Well, we will have no one to blame if we miss yet another wave of change because of our own complacency. So let's get ready, saints. Let's do it for Charlie! And let's also do it for our pioneers, whose courageous acts of sacrifice made life different for us today. It is incumbent upon each of us to speak up. Change is not inevitable; we must put our collective shoulders to the wheel.

*The rest of the world is inching closer and closer to gender equality. Every year, more women assume roles as CEOs, university presidents and even military generals. In fact, at present, the person most likely to be the next President of the United States is a woman. In such an event, our current priesthood restriction is going to look downright absurd. I certainly don't want to be the one trying to explain to my mother how a woman can be the single most important figure on planet earth, but the Lord can't trust her to pass out bread and water on a Sunday morning.*

# MORMON MALE PRIVILEGE AND HOW TO MAKE APPARENT GENDER DISPARITY IN THE CHURCH

Chelsea Shields Strayer , December 14, 2012

Many people are concerned with a very basic question right now: Why do some women feel unequal in the church? A few years ago I wrote a post for LDS WAVE about why I feel unequal. While this was not an exhaustive list, it made apparent many of the gender disparities that we often take for granted.

Another way to make inequality apparent is to talk about privilege. In academia there is a lot of literature on male privilege and white privilege—those unacknowledged advantages that men and majority ethnicities gain from women's and minorities' disadvantages. An important step in lessening, mitigating and ending this discrimination is acknowledging it. It is sometimes easier to see that others have different gender roles or even that women have some disadvantages. The truly difficult thing to recognize is the concomitant truth: what aspects of being male are advantageous?

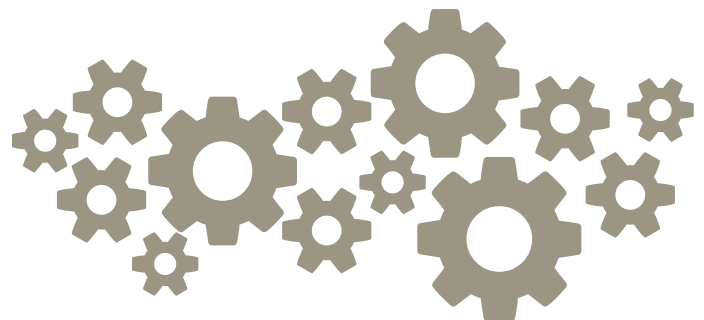
Do not despair, this is not an attack on men. Rather it is a mental exercise in trying to see those aspects of gender inequality that are normally hidden in our religious culture. Men (and women alike) are taught not to recognize our privileges or as Dr. Peggy McIntosh puts it the "invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. [Male] privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks" (McIntosh 1988). It is not the fault of the holder of these privileges that he has them. However, it is our moral and ethical duty to learn to recognize, mitigate and lessen them for greater religious gender equality.

I decided to try to identify some of the daily effects of these advantages in order to answer the question: What is it like to have Mormon male privilege? (Many of these points have corollaries in literature on white and male privilege).

As a Mormon Male:<sup>8</sup>

1. My odds of receiving a leadership calling compared to females of my same age, experience and spirituality are skewed in my favor. The more prestigious the calling, the larger the odds are skewed.
2. My odds of being asked to speak at Church functions compared to females of my same age, experience and spirituality are skewed in my favor. The larger the forum, the more my odds are skewed.
3. My Church leaders are people of my own gender. The more prestigious and powerful the calling, the more this is true.
4. When I ask to "see the person in charge," odds are that I will face a person of my own gender. The higher-up in the organization the person is, the surer I can be.
5. I can go home from most leadership meetings feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
6. I can be pretty sure that a disagreement with a woman is more likely to jeopardize her chances for advancement in leadership positions and her reputation as a good Mormon than it will jeopardize mine.
7. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my gender on trial. If I fall short as a missionary, gospel doctrine teacher, or general conference speaker, I can feel sure this won't be seen as a black mark against my entire gender's capabilities.
8. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my gender.
9. If I have low credibility as a leader, I can be sure that my gender is not the problem.
10. I am never asked to speak for or represent "the" perspective of all the people of my gender.
11. I can watch general conference and see people of my gender widely represented in visage and voice. I can see many diverse examples of different career choices, personalities and representations of my own gender in leadership positions.
12. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only man present, more than a woman in a group of men would be heard. I can be casual about whether to listen to the only woman in attendance more than women can be indifferent to the solitary voice of a man.
13. I can participate in meetings and share my opinions without colleagues suspecting that I am here only to represent my gender.
14. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of women and not pay a significant social penalty my ignorance.
15. I can critique the Church and talk about how I fear its policies without being seen as much of a cultural outsider as women who have the same thoughts.
16. If I declare there is a gender issue at hand (or there isn't a gender issue at hand), my gender will lend me more credibility for either position than a woman will have. I can worry about sexism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
17. I can choose to ignore developments in women's writing and activist programs, or disparage them, or learn from them, but in any case, I can find ways to be more or less protected from negative consequences of any of these choices.
18. My culture seldom teaches me to fear the opinions, perspectives, and power of people of the opposite gender.
19. I do not have to educate my sons to be aware of systemic sexism for their own daily physical protection and positive child development.
20. I can be pretty sure that my son's teachers and leaders will tolerate them as valuable members of society whose voices should be taken seriously; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitude toward their gender.
21. When I study the history of my Church, I am shown that largely people of my gender made it happen.

22. As a child, chances are I was encouraged to pursue interests, goals, and ambitions beyond parenthood more often than my sisters.
23. I can be pretty sure of finding people in my Church community who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps professionally.
24. I can think of many options-social, political, imaginative or professional- without asking whether a person of my gender would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
25. I can drive poorly, be late to a meeting, cry, and mismanage my financial affairs without it reflecting on my gender.
26. I can be sure that my children will be taught materials that testify about the works, words, existence, and deification of people of my own gender.
27. I can find entire Church manuals, lessons, talks, religious texts and historical scholarship which give attention only to people of my gender.
28. I can expect figurative language and imagery in most of our religious texts and arts to testify to the experiences of my gender.
29. If I am emotional or upset, chances are that it will be attributed to the problem I am facing rather than my gender.
30. I can be pretty certain that my opinions will be taken seriously and that my listeners will not assume that I am exaggerating.
31. I can be sure that if I need marital help or advice from my Church leaders that they will be someone of my own gender and more inclined to understand my life experiences than my wife's.
32. I can be pretty sure that no one will ever go over my head to speak to my wife about an issue or ask permission of my wife for something pertaining to my life.
33. If my day, week, or year is going badly, I do not need to ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had gender overtones.
34. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of dismissal or condescension owing to my gender.
35. I will never have to confess sexual sins to someone of the opposite sex. I will never have to sit in a disciplinary council and discuss sexual matters with an all-female court. I am far less likely to face sexual harassment and even sexual abuse in my church community than my female counterparts.
36. As a child, chances are that I was not told that I am responsible for someone else's sexual urges or impure thoughts based on what I wore or what I looked like.
37. Chances are I was not taught about sex and chastity from someone of the opposite gender.
38. I do not have to worry about the message my wardrobe sends about my sexual availability or virtue.
39. My garments are much more similar to regular male underwear than female garments are to regular women's underwear. I will never have to negotiate wearing garments and menstruating, recovering from childbirth and nursing and risk being denied access to sacred ordinances based on a member of the opposite gender thinking I'm doing so incorrectly. I will never have someone of the opposite sex ask me about my underwear habits on a regular basis for temple recommend interviews.
40. Chances are that if I work and provide for my family I will never be called selfish or a bad father.
41. Chances are if I do the same exact parental tasks as a woman I will receive praise for them and told that I am a good father more than she will receive praise for everyday parental tasks and told that she is a good mother.
42. The grooming regimen expected of me is relatively cheap and consumes little time. Chances are I never had youth activities devoted to grooming habits, style, or trying on tuxedos for my future wedding. Chances are I never had youth activities teaching me how to care for my wife's clothing.
43. Chances are no one comments about my clothing or body in leadership conversations and I am less likely to be scrutinized and turned away from a dance or program because of my clothing.
44. If I am not conventionally attractive, the disadvantages are relatively small and easy to ignore compared to my female counterparts. Chances are I haven't been told that it is my duty to try to look more attractive to be more marriageable or a better missionary.
45. In general, I am under much less pressure to be thin and attractive than my female counterparts. If I am fat, I probably suffer fewer social and economic consequences for being overweight than overweight women do. I probably have less social pressure to alter my body in extreme ways (weight loss, cosmetic surgery, hair color, etc.) in order to be seen as attractive as women do. Whether I am attractive is not as closely aligned with whether I am intelligent, competent, and worthwhile as it is for women.
46. I can wear nice clothing similar to what I wear in my everyday professional life to church. I can wear pants without any social repercussions.
47. I can be loud with no fear of being called shrill. I can be aggressive with no fear of being called pushy or controlling.
48. I can desire to hold the priesthood, serve in leadership positions, and expect respect and praise without being called power hungry.



49. On average, I am not interrupted by women as often as women are interrupted by men.
50. I can be confident that the ordinary language in all of my scriptural texts, Church materials, manuals, talks and prayers will always include my sex, i.e., "All men are alike unto God."
51. My ability to make important decisions and my capability in general will never be questioned depending on what time of the month it is.
52. I will never be expected to change my name upon marriage or questioned if I don't change my name.
53. I will never get fired from a Church-affiliated organization if I choose to have children.
54. Chances are that my mother, sisters, and wife do more of the cooking and household labor and, in particular, the most repetitive and unrewarding tasks, including tasks for my own family like remembering birthdays, buying presents, sending cards, etc.
55. Chances are that my mother, sisters, and wife do most of the childrearing.
56. If one of us needs to make education or career sacrifices to raise our children, chances are that my wife will make the sacrifice.
57. Chances are that I never had youth activities, lessons and/or advice from leaders about how to make personal sacrifices and support my wife in her educational and career goals.
58. I am certain that my gender will never be an obstacle to my being considered for positions, callings, and jobs both within the Church hierarchy and in Church-affiliated employment.
59. I can assume that I will usually be addressed by the proper deferential title of my calling.
60. I can be certain that when I want approval for a calling, ideas, and decisions in my calling that I will be communicating with someone in my own gender.
61. I can be certain that most talks about my gender do not refer to my reproductive capacity.
62. It is assumed that I will have interests and career goals outside of my family. I do not face any community recriminations or public sanctions for these.
63. It is highly likely that most of my spiritual leaders and mentors are of my same gender. It is just as likely that I do not have many (if any) spiritual leaders or mentors of the opposite gender.
64. I will have the opportunity for more prominent, prestigious, and public roles in the Church than my female counterparts.
65. I can be pretty sure that women will never teach me about sex, how to be a good man, what my divine role is, how to fulfill it, and how I should feel about it.
66. As a child I received more funding for youth programs in affiliation with the Scouting program and was allowed to do more elaborate, varied, and skills-based activities than my female counterparts.
67. I am aware of the existence and role of my Heavenly Father, and his position in the godhead. The role of my Heavenly Mother is a mystery.
68. I can be certain that people of my gender provided input to official Church declarations and proclamations.
69. I can be certain that I will never be asked to obey or hearken unto my wife in religious ceremonies.
70. All things being equal, it is assumed that my spiritual revelation and stewardship trumps that of my wife and female counterparts.
71. Men pray in general conference. Recently, women have also offered conference prayers, but prayers by women are still considered unusual.
72. I can bless my own children.
73. As a man, a could be called to handle church finances.
74. I have the opportunity to become a deacon, teacher, priest, elder, bishop, stake president, area authority, apostle, member of the Seventy, and prophet that my female counterparts do not.
75. I can hold the priesthood and ordain my son, when he reaches the proper age.
76. I can give blessings of healing on request. When I say prayers of healing or give blessings what I say is generally accepted as God's will. People grant the words I use authority and authenticity.
77. When I am in a leadership position, people will ask my counsel, expect my input, and allow me to give them tasks which will shape the next months and years of their personal, family, and community lives, because they believe my suggestions are either inspired by God or are God's direct counsel.
78. I rarely seek approval or validation about my life choices from members of the opposite gender in my Church community.
79. I can be pretty sure that I can walk into any room or meeting in my Church community and have more financial autonomy, decision-making power, and religious authority than anyone of the opposite gender.
80. I preside over my family.
81. I have the privilege of being unaware of my Mormon male privilege.
82. While I am single and looking for a future spouse, I will almost certainly have more women to choose from and pursue than the single women of a similar age and worthiness in my geographical area.
83. I can be certain that there are people of my same gender conducting, presiding, speaking, and sitting on the stand at all of my meetings.
84. I will never be asked about achieving work/life balance.

## WHO'S THE CAPTAIN OF THE ALLY-SHIP?

Kate Kelly, January 5, 2015

I have had several conversations that conform to the following script of late and I wanted to write to male allies regarding this familiar narrative.

**Male ally:** Says or does something sexist

**Feminist:** "That was sexist."

**Male ally:** "How dare you attack me! I'm not the enemy. Can't you see?? I'm on your side. Cut me some slack."

**Feminist:** Sighs. "Sure, but UGHhhhhhhh, get a grip on reality. That WAS sexist."

**Male Ally:** "You are being so rude. You are the reason lots of men eschew this conversation at all. You sure don't know how to make allies!"

Dear male ally,

In my continuing journey to become an ally to others I have learned a about what helps and hurts in supporting a community you are not a part of. Many of these lessons I have learned from young Mormon feminists. I still have miles and miles and MILES to go in becoming a better ally myself, and you can rest assured that I will take every word I write below to heart in my own work to be an ally to communities of color, my LGBTQIA brothers and sisters, people with varying abilities, those in poverty and all other communities I stand in solidarity with. Some of the lessons I am trying to learn apply to what I'd love to see from male allies.

The word ally itself means someone who has chosen to join in a fight or struggle. On some level they realize that becoming an ally and fighting alongside you is mutually beneficial. This may be that they see that discrimination negatively affects us all. But, also for the simple reason that feminists are on the right side of history, and allies want to get off the wrong side... more quickly than others in society who are dragging their feet.

One thing I've learned about allies is that they do not get to pick what makes them a good ally. Often in conversations with men when they say something offensive (mostly on the internet), they counter any 'pushback' to their sexist remarks with "I'm not the enemy! Give me a break, because I'm on your side." As if this claim to allyship is an excuse for bad behavior. Now, I know from my own experience in trying (and often failing) to be an ally that it hurts when someone in the group you think you are allied with calls you out. Sure, you're not the enemy in the sense that you're a modern Willburn Boggs trying to exterminate all feminists... but, there is *no single person* who is the enemy in patriarchy. The enemy is a collection of millions of people supporting an unequal structure by saying or doing small, individual sexist things. So, if you are saying or doing small, individual sexist things, you are indeed part of the problem.

It can feel like feminist rage is misdirected at you. Sometimes it might be. Sometimes women might just erroneously see you personally as one of the enemy. If the enemy were MEN, you

would be. But, like I said, in the end the enemy is not MEN. It is an institutionalized system that puts men above women called: patriarchy. Men aren't patriarchy. Patriarchy is made up of men and women who support an unequal system. But, it can be confusing because while not all men are in power (and oppressing women), most of those in power are men. Thus, this confusing system can definitely contribute to misguided and vicious attacks on men who are potential allies. If you feel unfairly targeted, this may be why.

Again, if you make a mistake (and say something sexist, for example) these public lashings by feminists can hurt. They can be so frustrating that you just want to throw your hands up and shout "well if THIS is how feminists act, I'm outta here." But, it's important to keep in mind that you don't get to choose what makes you a good ally. Women are fighting their struggle with or *without* you. You choosing to be on the right side of history is not a benevolent act, it's an act of self-preservation. Don't presume you'll be rewarded for common decency.

In any type of struggle, there are certain expectations of allies. We have a common adversary (so to speak) and so we fight together. Countries, corporations, communities alike. Sometimes we have unlikely allies and our common cause is the only thing that brings us together. But, if a so-called ally does something that damages us, we drop them- "With friends like this, who needs enemies" -style.

In foreign relations, countries come together and later those alliances may break. You can only trust an ally who supports you unequivocally in battle, so if a country does something against your national interests, that alliance is broken. After traitorous behavior you don't get to say, "But, don't you see... I'm not the real enemy?!" That does not work. A true ally does not get to choose the standard for acceptable behavior, and declare they get special leniency if they mess up (that would be a bully, not an ally). Of course, there are ways to smooth diplomatic ties after a fiasco, but that typically involves a formal apology and massaging of the relationship on both sides.

And so it is with male allies. As much as it pains me to say, and as much as it is difficult to hear: the struggle against sexism will continue without you. You are not doing us any grand favors by fighting by our side. Again, **this is a matter of common decency**. You are merely assuring that you are on the right side of history.

Don't get me wrong. We want you with us. We need allies. You are ahead of the pack! No struggle that involves a vast power imbalance, like the one against patriarchy, can be won without allies. And, I KNOW THIS SOUNDS HARSH but, it is not my job to make sure you feel welcome, secure and valuable. You already have a lifetime of positive reinforcement of your worth from the system we are trying to topple.

Is one person getting after you particularly doggedly or saying really rude things? Keep in mind that one woman yelling at you in ALL CAPS on the internet does not represent all of feminism or even all of Mormon feminism. But, as an ally, try to look for reasons to listen to what she is saying *instead* of reasons to discount what she is saying.

Women, especially Mormon women, have done a lot of really tough emotional work to loosen the shackles of patriarchy on our psyches. This typically takes many years and many, many tears to get through. Women have no obligation to do that emotional labor for you. You have to do it for yourself.

*Talk to your male friends and those you interact with who are not on-board with equality already.*

*Approach conversations with women with an open mind, ready to be wrong if you turn out to be.*

*Keep in mind that THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU. It never will be. Ask yourself: who is at the center stage? Who came up with this idea I have/ am so vigorously advocating (a man?)? Why am I trying to insert my idea/opinion/pain/relevancy into this space?*

*Vigorously engage women as your peers, but defer to them as the experts of their own experience.*

*Don't retreat and throw your hands up when a feminist lashes out at you. That is a manifestation of male privilege.*

After I was excommunicated an exceptionally well-connected Mormon man reached out to me and expressed his condolences for the violent way I had been treated, even though, he said he was, “agnostic about female ordination.” I replied:

*Thanks for your kind words and continued support. It really does mean a lot. But, with all due respect, I think you should keep in mind that as a man you have the luxury of being “agnostic about female ordination.” Your male privilege affords you an arm's length position it does not afford us.*

If you think to yourself after a particularly tough conflict, “Well, fine. I don't need this crazy b\*tch as much as she needs me (\*throw hands up in air with exasperation\*). I give up.” THAT is privilege. RIGHT THERE! You can choose to walk away from sexism. It does not negatively affect your life, your health, your emotional well-being, your standing in the community, your financial status, and your relationship with your children the way it does for me. YOU CAN WALK AWAY THIS CONVERSATION. I cannot. I hope that you can see why that is so infuriating.

Maybe it's true that we feminists just don't know how to make allies. Maybe I'm just like a stray dog who doesn't know which humans to trust so it snarls its teeth at everyone. (So, I guess technically I am calling myself a b\*tch.) It is definitely true... SO true that we feminists need added amounts of patience, long-suffering, and compassion. There is more room for tolerance and forgiveness. Definitely. But, we are angry. And we have EVERY RIGHT to be angry. In fact, there is something really, really disturbing about NOT being angry when you realize the huge brunt of the systematic discrimination you have faced your entire life because you are a girl. Seriously though, how can anyone NOT be incensed about that?

Maybe the only mistake you made is making a suggestion about how you see things could be “more productive,” “better executed,” or “more efficient.” You may think “SHEESH, I was just trying to help.” While you may be well-meaning, you

need to reexamine the way in which your “suggestions” or ideas are presented. It is very, very easy for a man to dip into the “mansplaining” territory when talking to women, even if it is unintentional. Are any of these phrases involved in your communication: ‘you should’? ‘it would be better if’? ‘you gals need to \_\_\_\_\_’? ‘you need more of x...y...z’? ‘I have x...y...z solution to your problem’? If so, re-think your approach. Instead of coming up with your own brilliant plan for ending sexism (and pushing it on women), why not just ask how you can be helpful and how the women you interact with want to be supported?

In my struggle to openly embrace male allies, it's hard to know what is an honest mistake and what is just plain lethargy and unwillingness to do the work necessary to learn about sexism. It's probably almost always a combination of the two. We could look the other way and excuse your sexist comment or action and preemptively forgive you because you ‘mean well’ saying, “bless his heart, he grew up in patriarchy too.”

But, do you want that?

Everyone wants the benefit of the doubt. But, do you want peers and colleagues in the struggle to have to say how dreadful you are, but cover it over with your supposed good intentions? I never want anyone to have to say that about me. Please recall that, yes, we have a common cause, but it is essential that you do the work to overcome privilege rather than insisting that I overlook your privilege.

So, who gets to captain the ally-ship? We do. If we say what you're doing is bad, or wrong, or offensive, take us seriously. Consider women the experts in this field. Accept the fact that you will never, ever be an expert on the female experience. Never. No matter how many supportive comments or ‘likes’ you make on feminist blogs. No matter how many times you say to other men, “Hey, dude that's sexist... knock it off.” No matter how much you self-correct your language and pronouns. You still have more to learn. You are an ally. This ship is not yours to navigate.

We are genuinely happy to have you along for the journey. Our intention is absolutely NOT to have you beat yourself up over mistakes. EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES. Just be open, teachable and strive for an extra dose of humility. Know that this ship set sail with or without you, but we want you to be onboard. Embrace the journey, and take a breather if there are bumps on the way. This work is difficult, but you can rest assured that in the end you will find yourself on the right side of history.



# SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES:

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

McBaine, Neylan. *Women at Church: Magnifying Women's Local Impact*. Greg Kofford Books, 2014.

Series by April Young Bennett at Exponent II on Church Discipline <http://theexponent.com/church-discipline-women-disciplined-by-men/>

*White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, Peggy McIntosh 1988. <http://amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html>

*Becoming an Ally*. <http://www.amazon.com/Becoming-An-Ally-Breaking-Oppression/dp/1842772252>

*Deep Green Resistance, Solidarity Post*. <http://deepgreenresistance.org/en/what-we-do/deep-green-resistance-feminist-solidarity-guidelines>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This verse has long been used to justify female subordination in Christianity. However, it is helpful to recognize that most scholars do not believe that 1 Timothy was written by Paul. "While seven of the letters attributed to Paul are almost universally accepted as authentic (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon), four are just as widely judged to be pseudepigraphical, i.e., written by unknown authors under Paul's name: Ephesians and the Pastorals (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). David E. Aune, *The Blackwell Companion to The New Testament* (add publication information?), 9.
- <sup>2</sup> While our emphasis is on the distinction between men and women in a patriarchal system. It is also important to recognize that a patriarchy is a system, which is ruled by elites. While men are generally favored over women, there is a wide discrepancy in the power held by men, with most power in the hands of a few male elites.
- <sup>3</sup> The Relief Society did actually receive the funds from the grain sale and kept the money in a consecrated fund. However, while Barbara Smith was serving as Relief Society president, the male church leadership placed the funds in the general Church fund.
- <sup>4</sup> "The next year brought the official death knell of this particular spiritual gift. On 29 July 1946, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve wrote to Belle S. Spafford, the Relief Society general president, and her counselors, Marianne C. Sharp and Gertrude R. Garff. 'While the authorities of the Church have ruled that it is permissible, under certain conditions and with the approval of the priesthood, for sisters to wash and anoint other sisters, yet they feel that it is far better for us to follow the plan the Lord has given us and send for the Elders of the Church to come and administer to the sick and afflicted.'" *A Gift Given, a Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick Among Mormon Women*, Linda King Newell • September 1981.
- <sup>5</sup> John D. Charles. (2004). *Endowed from On High: Understanding the Symbols of the Endowment* (publication information?), 64.
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2002/04/women-of-righteousness?lang=eng>
- <sup>7</sup> April Young Bennet, *The Exponent*, June 28, 2014. <http://www.theexponent.com/its-not-all-about-money/>
- <sup>8</sup> This is a list, which highlights distinctions between the treatment of men and women in our culture. While each is not entirely distinct or always present in every situation, these items can give the reader a sense of the challenges faced by women within our Mormon culture.