

8- “Martha received [Jesus] into her house.” Her sister Mary “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word” (Luke 10:38–39). Detail from *Mary Heard His Word*, by Walter Rane. © 2001 IRI.

9- In an age when women were generally expected to provide only temporal service, the Savior taught Martha and Mary that women could also participate spiritually in His work. He invited them to become His disciples and partake of salvation, “that good part” that would never be taken from them.<sup>4</sup>

10- Mary and Martha became active participants in the Lord’s mortal ministry. Later in the New Testament, we read Martha’s strong testimony of the Savior’s divinity. In a conversation with Jesus, she said, “I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”<sup>5</sup>

11- Throughout His mortal ministry, the Savior showed special love and concern for women. Detail from *Living Water*, by Simon Dewey. © Simon Dewey.

12- Many other female disciples traveled with Jesus and the Twelve, learning from Him spiritually and serving Him temporally. Luke recorded:

13- “And it came to pass afterward, that he [Jesus] went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

14- “And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

15- “And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.”<sup>6</sup>

16- It is likely that these women provided some economic support for Jesus and His Apostles, along with service such as cooking. In addition to receiving Jesus’s ministering—the glad tidings of His gospel and the blessings of His healing power—these women ministered to Him, imparting their substance and devotion.

17- The Apostle Paul wrote of women who, both in Church positions and of their own volition, served the Saints. His description of a righteous widow identified characteristics of many women in the early Church: “Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.”<sup>7</sup> Paul also wrote of the influence of wise, experienced older women. He counseled Titus to encourage older women to serve and teach young women about their eternal roles as wives and mothers, “that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.”<sup>8</sup>

18- The book of Acts includes an account of a woman who embodied the virtues Paul described. Tabitha, who was also known as Dorcas, lived in Joppa, where she made clothes for women in need.

19- Tabitha “was full of good works and almsdeeds” (Acts 9:36). *Tabitha Sewing*, by Jeremy Winborg. © Jeremy Winborg.

20- “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

21- “And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died. ...

22- “And forasmuch as [the city of] Lydda was nigh Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

23- “Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, ... all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

24- “But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.”<sup>9</sup>

25- The New Testament mentions other devoted women. Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, risked their lives for the Apostles and provided their home for Church gatherings.<sup>10</sup> Paul wrote, “Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is *in their house*.”<sup>11</sup>

26- A woman named Mary “bestowed much labour” for the Apostles.<sup>12</sup> A woman named Lydia was baptized along with her household and then ministered to those who had taught her.<sup>13</sup>

27- A woman named Phebe apparently held an ecclesiastical position of service in her congregation. Paul said, “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is *a servant of the church* ... that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been *a succourer of many*.”<sup>14</sup> The kind of service rendered by Phebe and other great women of the New Testament continues today with members of the Relief Society—leaders, visiting teachers, mothers, and others—who act as succorers, or helpers, of many.

### ***Female Disciples in the Latter Days***

28- The women in the ancient Church were dignified and noble, needed and valued. They served others, increased in personal holiness, and participated in the great work of saving souls.

29- These patterns have been restored in the latter days through the organization of the Relief Society. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “The Church was never perfectly organized until the women were thus organized.”<sup>15</sup> Sister Eliza R. Snow, the second Relief Society general president, reiterated this teaching. She said: “Although the name may be of modern date, the institution is of ancient origin. We were told by our martyred prophet that the same organization existed in the church anciently.”<sup>16</sup>

30- Besides Joseph Smith, other latter-day prophets have testified that the organization of Relief Society is an inspired part of the Restoration, whereby women in the Church are called in ecclesiastical positions to serve one another and to bless the entire Church. President Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Church, said, “This organization is divinely made, divinely authorized, divinely instituted, divinely ordained of God to minister for the salvation of the souls of women and of men.”<sup>17</sup> To a group of Relief Society sisters, President Lorenzo Snow, the fifth President of the Church, said: “You have ever been found at the side of the Priesthood, ready to strengthen their hands and to do

your part in helping to advance the interests of the kingdom of God; and as you have shared in these labors, so you will most certainly share in the triumph of the work and in the exaltation and glory which the Lord will give to His faithful children.”<sup>18</sup>

31- As women participate in Relief Society, they serve as valiant disciples of Jesus Christ in the work of salvation. Like the women in the ancient Church, they work alongside men who hold the priesthood to increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and seek out and help those in need. Sister Julie B. Beck, the fifteenth Relief Society general president, taught: “Through Relief Society we practice being disciples of Christ. We learn what He would have us learn, we do what He would have us do, and we become what He would have us become.”<sup>19</sup>

## Relief Society: A Restoration of an Ancient Pattern

*Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society (2011), 3-7*

*Although the name may be of modern date, the institution is of ancient origin. We were told by our martyred prophet that the same organization existed in the church anciently. ~Eliza R. Snow*

1- Throughout His mortal ministry, the Savior showed special love and concern for women. Elder James E. Talmage of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “The world’s greatest champion of woman and womanhood is Jesus the Christ.”<sup>1</sup>  
2- The Savior taught women in multitudes and as individuals, on the street and by the seashore, at the well and in their homes. He showed loving-kindness toward them and healed them and their family members. In many parables, He told stories of women engaged in ordinary activities. He demonstrated deep familiarity with women’s lives and drew timeless gospel lessons from their everyday experiences. He forgave them. He wept with them. He had compassion on them in their specific circumstances as daughters, wives, homemakers, mothers, and widows. He appreciated them and ennobled them.

3- Even in excruciating pain on the cross, the Savior expressed concern for His mother, who by then was very likely a widow in need of watchcare.<sup>2</sup> And the first person to whom He appeared after His Resurrection was a woman.<sup>3</sup>

4- “The cultivation of Christlike qualities is a demanding and relentless task—it is not for the seasonal worker or for those who will not stretch themselves, again and again.” Spencer W. Kimball *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 105

### ***Female Disciples in the New Testament***

5- While little is known about a formal organization of women in the New Testament, evidence suggests that women were vital participants in the Savior’s ministry. The New Testament includes accounts of women, named and unnamed, who exercised faith in Jesus Christ, learned and lived His teachings, and testified of His ministry, miracles, and majesty. These women became exemplary disciples and important witnesses in the work of salvation.

6- Women journeyed with Jesus and His Twelve Apostles. They gave of their substance to assist in His ministry. After His death and Resurrection, women continued to be faithful disciples. They met and prayed together with the Apostles. They provided their homes as gathering places for Church members. They valiantly participated in the work of saving souls, temporally and spiritually.

7- Martha and her sister Mary are examples of female disciples in the New Testament. Luke 10 contains an account of Martha opening her home to Jesus. She served the Lord by taking care of His temporal needs, and Mary sat at the Master’s feet and absorbed His teachings.