



RELIEF SOCIETY DISCUSSION

Priesthood Power

Understanding how we access priesthood power through covenants and discipleship





What is “Priesthood Authority” and who has access to it?

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood” — April 2014

“What other authority can it be?”



Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“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?”

“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.”



What is “Priesthood Power” and where does it come from?

Endowed With Priesthood Power



“Direct access to priesthood power”

President Camille N. Johnson *Relief Society General President*

“Jesus Christ is the source of relief for all of us ... we are entitled to priesthood *power*, *all* of us, men and women.”

“One most important reason is that as we *make* and *keep* those sacred covenants, we are entitled to priesthood power.”

— *Church News Podcast, Episode 141, June 20, 2023*



“A divine endowment that changes lives”

Sister J. Anette Dennis, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

“As daughters of God, we can be endowed with priesthood *power*—the *power* of God ... as we make and keep priesthood covenants.”

“God’s priesthood *power* will amplify our spiritual gifts and talents, it will give us strength beyond our own to carry the heavy burdens of mortality.. this brings the peace and *power* needed to face the physical, emotional, and spiritual “earthquakes” of life.

Source

J. Anette Dennis, “Accessing God’s Power through Covenants”
2024 Worldwide Relief Society Devotional
March 17, 2024

Our power comes from our covenants that connect us to Heaven..



Baptism, Confirmation, Sacrament, Washing and Anointing, Endowment, Sealing

Women and men receive the same ordinances, the same instruction, and the same promises of power from on high.



Temple work

All of the ordinances we partake of in the temple enable priesthood power. Everyone that officiates sacred ordinances does so under the keys held by the temple president — real, functioning priesthood authority.



The Same Power, Available to All



“Available to all of God’s children”

“When men and women go to the temple, they are both endowed with the same power, which is priesthood power. ... Access to the power and the blessings of the priesthood is available to *all* of God’s children. I testify of the power and blessings of the priesthood of God, are available for His sons and daughters alike.” — President Oaks



“Shared by husband and wife”

“In our Heavenly Father’s great priesthood-endowed plan, men have the unique responsibility to *administer* the priesthood, but *they are not* the priesthood. Men and women have different but ***equally*** valued roles. ... In the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife.” — Elder Russell M. Ballard

A Covenant Connection to Power



“It brings us greater access to His power”

President Emily Belle Freeman “Every Sunday you get to make a *new* covenant. What does covenant connection do?

“Little by little, you will grow and become more like Him. Your covenant connection with Him will bring you *greater access to His power.*”



“The stone of my access to God’s power”

Sister Andrea Muñoz Spannaus, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, described five “stones” a disciple of “The covenants we make with God, such as those we make in the ordinance of baptism, give us access to the **power** of godliness. God’s **power** is a real **power** that helps us face challenges, make good decisions, and *increase* our capacity to endure difficult situations.”



OK, what is a “Priesthood Office”?

Priesthood Power vs. Priesthood Office

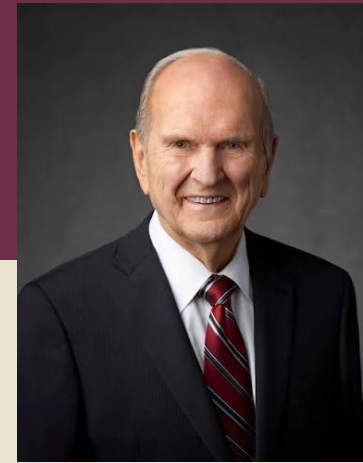
What Can Be Done	PRIESTHOOD OFFICE	PRIESTHOOD POWER
Baptize a new member	✓	
Confirm a new member; confer the gift of the Holy Ghost	✓	
Bless or administer the sacrament	✓	
Give a priesthood blessing of healing	✓	
Ordain another person to a priesthood office	✓	
Preside in a calling that holds priesthood keys (bishop, stake president, etc.)	✓	
Draw on God's power to bless your family and loved ones		✓
Receive personal revelation for your calling or your home and family		✓
Serve with delegated authority once set apart to a calling		✓
Receive priesthood power through temple covenants (the endowment)		✓
Officiate in temple ordinances, under the temple president's priesthood keys		✓
Minister to individuals and families		✓



HIS power is for ALL of us!!



President Nelson on Priesthood Power



Direct Access to Power

“Every woman and every man who makes covenants with God and keeps those covenants, and who participates worthily in priesthood ordinances, has *direct access to the power of God*.”

A Gift of Knowledge

“Those who are endowed in the house of the Lord receive a gift of God’s priesthood power by virtue of their *covenant*, along with a gift of knowledge to know how to draw upon that power.”

Heavens are Open to ALL

“The heavens are *just as open* to women who are endowed with God’s power flowing from their priesthood covenants as they are to men who bear the priesthood.”

Draw Upon His Power

“Sisters, you have the right to draw liberally upon the Savior’s power to help your family and others you love.”



It doesn't function without YOU...



THE SAVIOR'S EXAMPLE

Jesus and Women in His Ministry



Luke 8:1–3

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many other women traveled with Jesus and the Twelve, supporting His ministry “of their substance.”

Luke 10:38–42

Jesus commended Mary of Bethany for sitting at His feet as a disciple, saying she had chosen “that good part.”

John 4:1–30, 39–42

The Samaritan woman at the well was among the first to whom Jesus declared Himself the Messiah — and she went and testified to her city.

Mark 5:25–34

Jesus called a woman healed by her faith “daughter” and told her, “thy faith hath made thee whole.”



THE FIRST WITNESSES

First to the Tomb, First to Testify

Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20 each record that it was women — Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and others — who came to the tomb early that morning and were the first to learn the Lord had risen.

“Go to my brethren, and say unto them...” — *John 20:17*

Mary Magdalene was the first person to see the resurrected Christ, and He personally commissioned her to carry the news of His Resurrection to the apostles — the *most important message in human history*, entrusted first to a woman.

Women of Power — Old Testament



Deborah

Judges 4–5

Prophetess and judge who led Israel to victory and safety.



Esther

Esther 4:14

Risked her life for her people, prepared “for such a time as this.”



Daughters of Zelophehad

Numbers 27

Petitioned Moses for their inheritance; the Lord affirmed they “speak right.”



Abigail

1 Samuel 25

Wisdom and courage that prevented bloodshed and turned away wrath.



Anna

Luke 2:36–38

Aged prophetess in the temple who recognized and testified of the infant Christ.

Women of Power — Book of Mormon & D&C



Mothers of the Stripling Warriors

Alma 56:47–48

Two thousand young men's unshaken faith is credited directly to what “their mothers had taught them.”



Abish

Alma 19

A Lamanite servant whose long-held faith became the turning point for the conversion of a king's household.



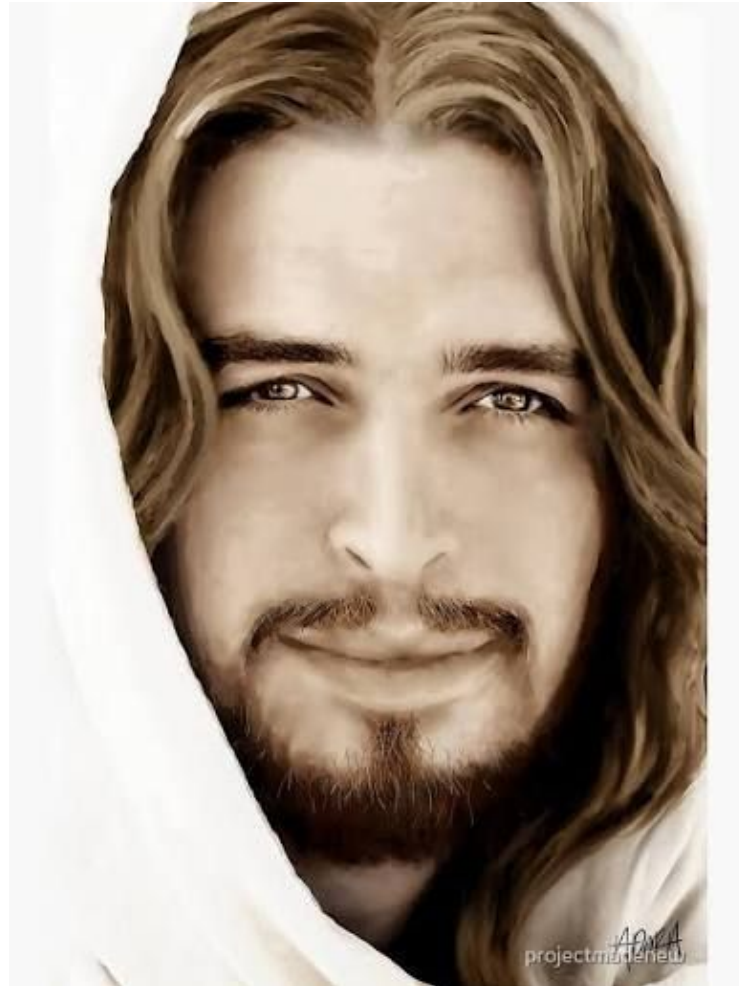
Emma Smith

Doctrine and Covenants 25

Called by revelation an “elect lady,” given specific spiritual responsibility to expound scripture and exhort the Church.

DISCIPLESHIP

Sometimes we can over complicate it...





FOR YOUR PERSONAL STUDY

Talks to Study

President Nelson

“Spiritual Treasures” — General Women's Session, October 2019.

Linda K. Burton

“Priesthood Power—Available to All” — June 2014.

President Oaks

“The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood” — General Conference, October 2014.

Accessing this power in ordinary life



Keeping covenants

Every covenant kept re-opens access to the Lord's power — covenants are not a one-time event but a daily relationship.



Serving in callings

Ministering, teaching, serving in Relief Society — each is an exercise of real, delegated priesthood authority.



Blessing a home

Prayer, scripture study, and testimony shared in the home carry priesthood power into family life.



Personal revelation

Seeking and receiving guidance from the Spirit is itself an exercise of power that flows through covenant.



THE FOUNDATION

Doctrine and Covenants 84

Given through Joseph Smith, September 1832

“In the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.” *(v. 20, condensed)*

Section 84 doesn't say priesthood power flows only to men who hold an office. It says the power of godliness is made manifest through sacred ordinances — ordinances ***every endowed man and woman has received***.

A helpful distinction, taught by scholars of the Restoration:

Keys	The right to <i>direct</i> — held by those set apart to preside
Offices	Ordination to a specific priesthood <i>office</i>
Power	The Lord's <i>power</i> to bless, protect, and <i>act</i> — accessed through covenants
Authority	The right to <i>act</i> , given through callings and ordinances



LET'S DISCUSS — CORE QUESTIONS

Questions to consider together

- 1 In the temple, women and men make identical covenants. How does that shape how you see your own access to priesthood power?
- 2 Elder Oaks taught that a woman set apart to a calling receives real priesthood authority for that service. Where have you felt that authority at work in a calling you've held?
- 3 It was women who were first to know of Christ's Resurrection and first sent to testify of it. What does that pattern teach you about how the Savior sees women?



OUR HISTORY

Nauvoo, and the founding of Relief Society

On March 17, 1842, Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society and taught the sisters he was “*turning the key*” to them — that from that day forward, knowledge and intelligence would flow down.

As recorded in the Relief Society minutes, Joseph Smith taught that the sisters would come into possession of the privileges, blessings, and gifts of the priesthood — a promise the Church has continued to unfold ever since.



Worth exploring further

followHIM Podcast — Doctrine & Covenants 84, Episode 31, with Dr. Barbara Morgan Gardner: a clear, faithful walkthrough of how women hold priesthood power and authority, and how the Nauvoo Relief Society minutes teach it.

More to consider

- 1 Elder Oaks taught there's no “stepping up” or “stepping down” in the Lord's service — only forward or backward. How does that reframe the calling you have right now?
- 2 Consider Deborah, Esther, the daughters of Zelophehad, Abigail, Anna, or Abish. Which of these women's stories feels most relevant to your life right now, and why?
- 3 The stripling warriors' faith is credited directly to what their mothers taught them. Where have you seen a woman's faith shape someone else's life?
- 4 Emma Smith was called an “elect lady” and given specific spiritual responsibilities. What does it mean to you to be “elect” in your own covenant path?
- 5 What is one way you could more fully seek and use priesthood power through your covenants this week?



MORE FROM followHIM

Faithful Women Voices on the Podcast

Dr. Wendy Ulrich

Doctrine and Covenants 18 — explores the difference between priesthood keys and priesthood service, and how every man, woman, and child in the Church can experience priesthood power.

Dr. Barbara Morgan Gardner

Doctrine and Covenants 84, Episodes 30–31 — the primary source for this lesson's keys/offices/power/authority framework, and a clear, faithful walkthrough of how women hold priesthood power.

Christina Olson

Ezra and Nehemiah — traces the themes of temple, law, and covenant-making, and “the beautifully imperfect work of becoming a covenant people again.”

Sister Elaine Dalton

Exodus — explores the Israelites' Red Sea crossing as a type of Christ's power to deliver us, with application to our own “Red Sea moments.”



MORE FROM followHIM

Old & New Testament Scholars, Too

Dr. Carli Anderson

Old Testament, Genesis 18–23 (2026) — examines Sarah and Abraham as true covenant partners, teaching the Abrahamic covenant could as fairly be called the “Abrahamic-Sarah” covenant.

Dr. Krystal Pierce

Old Testament, Exodus 1–6 (2026) — highlights the faithful women — midwives, a mother, a sister, a princess — whose covenant courage preserved the prophet who would lead Israel to freedom.

Dr. Camille Fronk Olson

Old Testament, Joshua 1–4 (2026) — unpacks Rahab's unlikely covenant with Israel's spies, a reminder that the Lord's covenant power is worth remembering.

Dr. Gaye Strathearn

New Testament, Luke 1 (2023) — examines Mary and Elisabeth as examples of discipleship and covenant service, a fitting companion to this lesson's Luke 1–John 4 material.