

Monika's Question

As you read the following scenario aloud as a group, pause to discuss the accompanying questions:

A young woman named Monika comes from a faithful family and has learned the gospel throughout her life. She loves attending Young Women and seminary. One day a girl from school says to her that the Church does not value women because women do not hold the priesthood or certain leadership positions. The girl argues that the world has recognized the contribution of women and treats them as equals, and then she asks Monika, "When will the Church catch up with the rest of the world on this social issue?"

Monika has never felt unloved or unappreciated at Church. She has been taught that she has a divine nature and individual worth. She has observed powerful Young Women leaders and a wonderful mother who happily serve in the Church and in their communities. But Monika is unsure how to answer the question. In fact, it starts to bother her, and she begins to wonder why women don't hold certain positions in the Church. The argument she heard about equality and fairness for men and women begins to sound reasonable to her.

One day in seminary Monika writes a note to her seminary teacher, Sister Bell, asking, "When will the Church be like everyone else and start treating men and women equally?" The following day, Sister Bell decides to address the question in class. She asks how a person with this question might act in faith. Students discuss things such as the importance of praying to Heavenly Father for help and understanding. One student expresses the importance of holding on to what they already understand about their relationship with Heavenly Father and shares an example of when she came to know that Heavenly Father loves her and values her.

- How could the comments by Monika's classmates help her act in faith?
- What other suggestions do you have for how a person with this question might act in faith?

To help the class consider how they might examine the question with an eternal perspective, Sister Bell encourages them to think about the worldly assumption or premise upon which the question is based. She asks, "How might the world define equality and fairness?" A few students comment on how some people think that equality and fairness mean that everything must be the same between men and women. A young man explains that according to the world, a person's position determines his or her importance, and that could lead to the perspective that some Church callings are more valued than others, making it seem unfair if everyone can't hold those callings.

- Can you think of any other worldly assumptions or premises that could influence how some people might view callings or positions in the Church?

Sister Bell then asks how the class might reframe this question from the Lord's perspective. Because this is a difficult skill, Sister Bell suggests that they might ask, "How does the Lord define equality and fairness?" Or "How does the Lord view the role of men and women in the plan of salvation?" One student suggests that many prophets have taught that to the Lord, equality does not mean that men and women are exactly the same. Another student brings up "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" and says that in the plan of salvation, and in the Church, both men and women have different but equally important roles. One young woman says, "I was thinking of it a little differently. Should this be about what we want or should we care more about what the Lord wants?"



Sister Bell thanks the students for their insights and reminds them that the Savior does not view callings and leadership as the world does. She points out that the scriptures teach that “the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have not need of thee” (1 Corinthians 12:21) but that all members are an integral part of the same body and that all are needed and have an opportunity to serve.

Then Sister Bell asks, “During His mortal ministry, how did the Savior show that He loved and valued women?” With the help of their teacher, the students think of examples, like the way He treated His mother, the Samaritan woman at the well, and Mary Magdalene. They also remember miracles that He performed that blessed and healed women.

To help her students seek further understanding through divinely appointed sources, Sister Bell encourages her students to search their memories for helpful scripture references and talks from Church leaders that relate to this question. They identify resources such as “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” and the Gospel Topics Essays. One particular talk is suggested that catches Monika’s attention. It is a talk by Sister Linda K. Burton called “We’ll Ascend Together” from the April 2015 general conference. Sister Bell also suggests a talk given by President Russell M. Nelson called “A Plea to My Sisters” from the October 2015 general conference. Monika makes a note of these in her study journal and decides to study them later.

- Can you think of any additional divinely appointed sources that might help someone with Monika’s question?

The discussion ends with Sister Bell sharing her testimony that all who serve in the Church—men and women—are called under the direction of one who holds priesthood keys, and she reminds them that this truth is found in Doctrine and Covenants 42:11. She also reminds her students that “whoever functions in an office or calling received from one who holds priesthood keys exercises priesthood authority in performing her or his assigned duties” (Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 51). She also reminds her students of the doctrinal mastery scripture passage that says “The Lord . . . doeth that which is good among the children of men; . . . and he inviteth them *all* to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, *male and female*; . . . *all* are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33; italics added). Sister Bell encourages her students to continue to prayerfully study this question and invites them to bring to class what they learn.

- What did you learn from this scenario about Monika’s question?