



## Anchoring Tempest-Tossed Men: Faith's Response to a Rising Crisis

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*What can heal the crisis facing young men? Eliza R. Snow taught a vision of mutual flourishing and identity.*

In 1871, early feminist icons Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton visited Salt Lake City. They were welcomed by Latter-day Saint women and leaders, including General Relief Society President Eliza R. Snow. As they toured Utah, they praised the progress of Latter-day Saint women—especially in earning the right to vote—but also criticized the Church, its male-led structure, and its traditions. They condemned the priesthood, early marriage, and large families, arguing these practices benefited men at women's expense. Stanton even urged women to form their own religious creeds, while Anthony said any church governed solely by male revelation could never satisfy her.

While President Snow supported women's progress, she was alarmed by the attacks on her faith. A month later, she wrote a speech to help Latter-day Saints interpret both praise and criticism. "In the Church and Kingdom of God, the interests of men and women are the same," she wrote. "Man has no interests separate from that of women ... our interests are all united." In today's divided cultural moment, Snow's gospel-centered vision of equality is more needed than ever—not just to defend women, but to offer hope to a generation of quietly struggling young men.

The crisis among young men has only recently drawn attention from economists and social scientists, despite being visible for years. Declines in [college graduation](#), rising male [unemployment](#), collapsing [dating and marriage](#) trends, and surging [loneliness](#) all point to a worsening problem. Even mental health [experts](#) are pointing out that depression, addiction, and suicide are disproportionately affecting young men.

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I noticed this crisis long before the experts did—in high school, on my mission, and most clearly while serving as an Elders Quorum president in my YSA ward in Spanish Fork, Utah. Even with that firsthand experience, I don't believe young men are simple victims, or that any one cause is to blame. But what I've seen is this: as jobs, degrees, and romantic prospects feel scarcer, many men retreat into video games, pornography, and distraction. They delay adulthood out of fear and self-doubt. Society, meanwhile, promotes female empowerment while labeling men as toxic or privileged. I see my peers growing bitter, feeling punished for sins they didn't commit, unsure what to believe, and disconnected from any clear sense of purpose. It's a spiritual crisis that we need to start taking seriously.

As things worsen, many young men—including myself—are searching for answers. But voicing these concerns often triggers a mental gag reflex, as if sympathy for men means opposing women's progress. Anyone who raises men's issues risks being branded "redpilled," misogynistic, or sexist. This stigma creates an unnecessary barrier to discussing solutions. Our first step must be to reject the premise that helping men and helping women are mutually exclusive agendas. This premise stifles productive dialogue and has, in part, helped create the current crisis in the first place.

There are two main camps who hold to the premise of mutual exclusivity: progressives, who tell us men unfairly hoard all social capital—a concept known as “the patriarchy”; and the growing reactionary movement (known as the “incel” or “ultra-masculinity” movement) who argue several versions of the opposite. Because both sides strongly believe that men and women are locked in a zero-sum game, the public consciousness has widely accepted mutual exclusivity as an unchangeable fact. Unfortunately, this mindset is somewhat prevalent in Latter-day Saints as well.

While it's true that women have historically been on the losing end of the societal contract, eventually we need to recognize the incredible successes of the feminist movement in recent decades. Consider this: women's BA degree share [rose](#) from 43% in 1979 to 58% in 2020—with men dropping from 57% to 42%—and since 1979, women's inflation-adjusted median wage [increased](#) by 29%, while men's dropped by 3%, with poorer men hit hardest. This means that in education, men are *further* behind women today than women were behind men 50 years ago, and in the workplace, men are on a downward trajectory for the first time in history. More anomalies like this continue to surface. When women were behind, society mobilized to help them, and now they have progressed by leaps and bounds. But now, in some very critical ways, young men are falling behind, and they are not receiving the same amount of attention or support to prevent further decline. It is both possible and important to help both men and women, for the fates of one are inevitably tied to the other. Better young men mean better and safer peers, coworkers, and family members, and most importantly, more valuable, supportive, and reliable partners.

Eliza R. Snow understood that men and women needed each other, and argued that it would be counterproductive for women to tear down men in the pursuit of equality. She pointed out that men only stood to gain from the increased capacity of women as they became educated, organized, and empowered. As she once [declared](#) in one Relief Society meeting, “I feel happy to see so many of my brethren present. It strengthens me to have them know what we are teaching their wives and daughters. The outside world [is] continually clashing, but we like the assistance of our husbands in our organized state. We stand as [helpmeets] to our husbands.” To Snow, there were no limited resources. Not only was there enough to go around, there was a way to make more for everyone.

If we accept this as true for today, as Snow believed it was in 1871, we open the door to finding win-win, common-sense solutions to problems, something not possible in the world's framework. President Spencer W. Kimball reinforced this when he prophetically [charged](#) BYU to “break” from the educational establishment so that it may propose “gospel methodology, concepts, and insights” the world could never discover on its own.

It's for this reason I believe The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the moral authority to lead out on these issues. We believe that harmonious and synergistic cooperation between men and women is an essential qualifier for eternal life, and this alone gives us a better foundation to address the divide between the sexes than any other organization on Earth. There is much the Latter-day Saints of Christ's Church can do to help young men and women in this critical moment. We can champion the enablement of women just as Eliza R. Snow intended, and at the same time, we can offer help and hope to the young men facing the intense tempests of our day alone.

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So what exactly needs to happen? The crisis in young men stems from two core issues: a lack of connection and a lack of identity. I explore these in more depth—and offer specific, culturally grounded solutions—in the [first print edition](#) of *The Cougar Chronicle*, BYU's independent student paper, published this summer. Here, I'll briefly share a few suggestions Latter-day Saints can apply, but for the full picture, I encourage reading the complete piece.

First, young men face a deep lack of connection—both with friends and romantic partners. A male loneliness epidemic is clear in studies like one from the Survey Center on American Life, which found that 15% of men report having no close friends, a “staggering” 12% increase since 1990. The dating landscape is equally dismal. Today, [research](#) shows how a minority of high-value men are dominating romantic and sexual attention, but the cultural retreat from marriage has [removed](#) their incentive to grow up and commit. Meanwhile, [most](#) men are left frustrated, fueling their loneliness and

turning them towards pornography, drugs, and distractions that stunt growth romantically, spiritually, and economically. Women, though more educated and financially stable, still seek *more* educated and stable partners—something increasingly hard to find. Many women are understandably disillusioned with the immature, non-committal men at the top of the ladder, and equally put off by the lonely, insecure men at the bottom. Some women don't even feel safe, with over a [third](#) believing most men would take sexual advantage of a woman if given the chance.

As I just alluded to, loneliness is also mutually reinforcing with the widespread pornography epidemic. A 2007 BYU [study](#) found that 48% of male students viewed pornography at least weekly, with 3% of women reporting the same. One in five men said they viewed it nearly daily. These numbers match recent national trends, so the rates are likely similar—or even higher—today. That suggests over 10,000 Latter-day Saint young men in Provo alone may be battling pornography habits. This places an overwhelming burden on ward and stake leaders, who often serve as the only institutional line of defense.

There are uncounted possible solutions to help young men break free from porn, vice, and isolation and foster their connection with peers and romantic partners. In the case of pornography, more leaders (particularly those in older generations who do not understand the prevalence and modus operandi of pornography today) need to follow the example of the Brethren and utilize more modern and scientific approaches to helping young men with pornography addictions. This needs to be discussed more frequently and with more exactness by parents, leaders, and young men themselves.

We also need to address the imbalance in the friendship and dating economies. Because women continue to value men who have more resources than they do, perhaps more needs to be done to offer men scholarships to graduate programs or advancement opportunities in certain fields, such as nursing or education. More needs to be done about the increasing rate at which men are dropping out of school. There is also more we can do to foster networking and mentorship among young men to build friendships and accelerate careers. We don't have every answer, but as of right now, no effort to move in the direction of helping young men find connection would be wasted.

The second crisis—lack of identity—stems from a failure to teach young men who they are. Many don't know what masculinity is, how to use it, or whether it's even good.

Cultural and institutional breakdowns have failed them: fewer male teachers, collapsed male-mentoring systems, disregard for male achievement, and the demonization of masculinity in pop culture. The “toxic masculinity” label has hurt boys’ self-perception. As one sociologist warned, “In the rush to condemn the dark side of masculine traits ... the message ... is all too often, there is something wrong with you.” In this vacuum, young men turn to online spaces for guidance. This has given rise to the “manosphere”—a mix of male-focused communities trying to fill the gaps. Researchers Eva Bujalka and Ben Rich write that it resonates because it speaks to young men’s real struggles: romantic rejection, alienation, economic failure, loneliness, and hopelessness.

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The solution, of course, is to start filling the vacuum with something better. Rather than telling men their masculinity is toxic, we should help men understand the truth: that masculinity is a complex basket of *natural* and *neutral* characteristics and tendencies which can be used for good or for evil. We then teach them that ‘healthy’ or ‘mature’ masculinity is the careful channeling of these base elements towards honorable pursuits, such as education, talents, providing for a family, and serving God. Latter-day Saints should seek every opportunity to ensure that young men are being properly taught *who they are as men* to prevent them from feeling drawn into the vacuum of falsehoods that exists online. The bottom line is that we must be more explicit in our educational opportunities with them. There is no danger in telling men that it is not just good, but amazing, to be a righteous man bearing the priesthood.

As our young men suffer silently, few Latter-day Saints seem to be aware of how much good they can do at so little a cost. We have been prepared by examples like Eliza R Snow, modern prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ to be examples to the world that compassion and equity for all is possible, even with difficult issues like today’s gender divide. No other church is built on a better foundation to heal this divide than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which teaches that an essential qualifier for eternal life itself is harmonious and synergistic cooperation between men and women. As Latter-day Saints become aware of the tempests our young men are facing and employ gospel-based relief efforts, lives will be changed, courses will be rerouted,



divisions will be healed, the culture will be strengthened, and our struggling, tempest-tossed young men will finally see the flickering light of hope across the waves.

## About the author

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