NO

DOUBT

ABOUT

IT

SHERI DEW
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“Although there are many things about this life that I do not understand, there are some truths about which I no longer have any doubt.”

With that introduction, Sheri Dew, formerly of the general Relief Society presidency, offers a faith-filled account of what she believes—and why. She bears powerful testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ, that he cares about us personally and will do for each one of us what He has promised.

He will do. She discusses our individual, unique missions of mortality, reminding us who we are and who we have always been. And she reminds us of the beauty of the restored gospel, the power of families, the importance of the priesthood, the security of having a living prophet, the glory of the temple, and the transcendent blessings available to all who seek the Lord.

Latter-day Saints across the world have come to appreciate Sister Dew’s personable style, her memorable stories, and the solid understanding of doctrine. No Doubt about It is a wonderful blend of all three, the book people have been asking for an one that will change their lives for the better.

From BYU Bookstore.com
Reviewed by Anne  
September 20, 2002

★★★★★

**Each woman in our local book club found perspective, insight, and motivation in this book.**
Our book club in Turner Oregon, "The Page Turners" picked No Doubt about It for this month's discussion. Here are some comments from our meeting:

Becky: "I like the way Sheri Dew shares her experiences and then applies those to a gospel concept. This whole book opens your mind to your possibilities, and shows how Heavenly Father values us as women."

Carol: "Sister Dew emphasizes how much we need to be in tune with the Spirit. As a C.S. Lewis fan, his quotes jumped off the pages at me."

JayLynn: She makes it seem like we can do it. She shows us how we can overcome obstacles and listen to the Spirit more. There were a lot of 'take home' ideas." 

Myrna: "I was impressed with how much she has accomplished in her life. That's inspiring for me when I think I have too much to do."

Laura: "I got a new perspective on my life when I realized that we have an "individually-tailored mortal tutorial."

Anne: "I gained a new perspective as I came to realize that just as Christ had a mission to perform, we women likewise have a mission, and we cannot allow Satan to deter us."

From Amazon.com
Sheri L. Dew is a Latter-day Saint leader, inspirational speaker, writer, White House Delegate to the U.N., and CEO of Deseret Book.

Born in Kansas circa 1954, Dew grew up on a farm, obtained a college degree from Brigham Young University, and quickly moved into the Mormon publishing business. Between 1997 and 2002 she served as a counselor in the presidency of the women’s Relief Society, the first single woman ever to achieve such a high position in the LDS Church.

Dew has spoken countless times to Mormon audiences in the US and around the world, traveling in Colombia, Africa, the Philippines, Cambodia, Ecuador, and Japan. As an author, Dew wrote the official biographies of two LDS Presidents, Ezra Taft Benson and Gordon B. Hinckley, the biography of Miss America Sharlene Wells, and two inspirational volumes.

As a delegate to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, Sheri Dew defended President George W. Bush’s conservative social agenda, proposing abstinence and monogamy as the solution to the AIDS pandemic and other global ills. She often speaks about the sanctity of marriage, motherhood, and the family, while opposing progressive social trends such as gay marriage or the idea that there should be no difference between men and women’s gender roles.

After a 1999 trip to Ghana, Dew began to spearhead a humanitarian program to send children’s books to impoverished areas of the world. The first shipment of 6,500 books was sent to Ghana and Fiji in July 2005.

Sheri Dew has been called “the most prominent single LDS woman” ("Examines Singles Stigma," BYU NewsNet, 24 February 2003)
Selected Bibliography

Sheri Dew: Living the unexpected life
'Unmarried' leader is almost a celebrity among LDS

Sunday, March 10, 2002

By Doug Robinson
Deseret News senior writer

Sheri L. Dew is the CEO of a publishing company, one of the leaders of a worldwide church and the author of several books, but that's not how many people identify her.

"Oh, you're the unmarried one," perfect strangers will blurt out upon meeting her.

The unmarried general officer of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Dew might be better known more for what she doesn't have — a husband — than by what she does have — a dual career, brains, surpassing talent as a pianist, writer and speaker (and, umm, Game Boy player). This is a woman who has accomplished great things while waiting for love to come along, but she is still famous for her marital status, largely because she helps lead a church that is centered on marriage and family.

Dew is everywhere confronted with her singleness, whether in the family-lined pews of the chapel on Sunday and the constant emphasis on the family unit, or with questions from the curious.

"How come you're not married?" she is often asked.

"Because no one asked," she likes to say, using her deft humor, as she often does, to deflect painful or awkward moments.

The questions have even turned ignorant and mean:

*How can you call yourself an LDS woman and not be married?*

She always wanted and expected to be married, to raise children, to stay at home; she never meant to become a career woman, no apologies to feminists (who must be cringing). As she says, "There isn't anyone who wants to see me married more than I do."

But here she is, at 48, the newly named CEO of Deseret Book, the second counselor in the LDS Church's Relief Society presidency — the first *unmarried* woman ever to become a general officer in the church (there's that unmarried thing again) — and the
author of four books. Never did she imagine such a career, nor that she would live her life alone. Dew's best friend, Wendy Watson, a professor at Brigham Young University who is also single, calls it "living the unexpected life."

It has become part of her appeal.

Sheri Dew, the Kansas farm girl, stands out in the LDS Church, and not just because she is 5-foot-10. She receives thousands of letters from church members and is approached on the street by her, well, fans. The LDS Church understandably shies from celebrity Mormonism, but there is no denying Dew's popularity.

"There is no question about it," says Sharon Larson, second counselor in the LDS Church's Young Women general presidency and another of Dew's close friends. "I have traveled with her to Africa, Southeast Asia, Japan and Korea, and truly everywhere we've gone people just come up to her. They tell her, 'You speak to my soul. You are so real.' And she is. She has her own following, independent of her calling."

Dew, whose appeal is such that the Republican Party tried to convince her to run for political office this fall, is a beacon for Mormons who are living the unexpected life, the life that didn't turn out as they had planned and hoped, the life that was prescribed for them by their church.

As Julie Dockstader Heaps, a staff writer for the LDS Church News, puts it, "She doesn't have the 'Molly Mormon' life story where everything is choreographed — get married, raise kids, husband becomes stake president by 35. She's a very real person and people can relate to her. Because most people out there aren't living that kind of life."

She has become a favorite speaker in LDS circles because of her vulnerability, honesty, hard-won wisdom and willingness to share so much of her life at the pulpit. "She has gotten so much mileage out of bad hair, her height, her weight," says Watson. "She's not afraid to poke fun at herself. That's classic Dew."

Dew has mined her past for lessons learned and future sermons, although there is one painful chapter of her life she hasn't shared with the public: A double betrayal and a missed chance at marriage that proved to be both.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Let's back up and tell this story the way she would do it in one of her popular sermons — through a few key events in her life and what they taught her.
Hoops Dew

To this day it bothers her. It is one of her biggest regrets. It is a gaping hole in her life left by her one true love.

Basketball.

She wanted to be a college basketball player. Perhaps there was no place, besides a chapel, that she was more comfortable or confident than on a basketball court. There, the girl who longed to be petite and pretty discovered her size was no longer a curse, but a blessing. She was a star player in basketball-crazy Kansas at a tiny high school in Ulysses (population 4,000), averaging 23 points and 17 rebounds a game. She had a hook shot, a post-up move, a jump shot, and she could move under the basket to get free for shots.

"With all the modesty I can muster, I was good," she says. "I haven't seen many girls who could play basketball at that age who were as good as I was."

But this was in the late '60s and '70s, when there were few opportunities for girls to play college basketball. She chose to attend BYU and planned to try out for the school's basketball team.

On the day of tryouts, she reported to the Richards Building, opened the gym door a crack, peeked at the players inside and the confidence drained right out the bottom of her shoes. She couldn't make herself step through the door. She thought she could work up her courage if she paced the hallway outside the gym for a while. She walked back and forth — for three hours.

She never did enter the gym. When the tryout ended, she walked slowly to her dorm, castigating herself for not having the guts to try out.

"It's is one of my biggest regrets," she says. "I've never gotten over it."

One of her e-mail addresses says it all: hoopsdew.

Jump ahead to last autumn. BYU athletic director Elaine Michaelis, who coached the basketball team when Dew was a student, invited Dew to speak to the school's female athletes. Dew told the above story for the first time in her life, one she hadn't even confided to her family. Her point was that these athletes were doing something she had wanted to do, but lacked the courage to try.

Afterward, Michaelis told Dew, "I remember my 1971 team really well. You know why? We played all season one player short. I tried to fill my roster, and I couldn't. That
year I was looking for a tall center who could post up."

Sitting in her office, Dew finishes this story and says, "I felt as if I had been kicked in the stomach when she told me that. That was supposed to be my spot on the team. You mean out of 25,000 students they couldn't find one girl who could fill that spot?!"

"The truth is, nobody can take your place. That was a very interesting lesson. I thought I was good, but I'll never know. My fear and shyness paralyzed me. My whole life I've felt like I didn't quite measure up."

If there is one statement that defines Dew's life, it is that last one. It is a recurring theme and one she repeats frequently during several hours of interviews. Such feelings undoubtedly have their beginnings in her youth.

She grew up on a large farm in southwestern Kansas, where six generations of her family are buried on the Plains. She was driving farm equipment as soon as she could see over the steering wheel, which was the fourth grade in her case. She drove trucks loaded with grain during harvest and dragged a disc and sweep over the fields behind a tractor.

Dew grew up shy and backward and dated rarely. She was isolated in many ways — by her size, by the farm, by her religion. She reached her adult height by the seventh grade — "No 11-year-old girl wants to be 5-10," she says. "I always felt big and unattractive." Her religion was just one more thing that made her "different." She was the only Mormon in her school.

"I had a lot of friends who were boys," she says. "I played ball with them, but we didn't date. They didn't ask me that much because I wasn't cute enough or because I didn't drink or party. I had friends who were girls, but again, at a certain point in your adolescence they start doing things I couldn't do — drinking, sleeping around. There was this understanding that I just didn't do those things. I was a friend during school time, but not much after that. By the time I got to BYU, I was a social mess, an absolute misfit. There is not a shyer, more pathetic kid who stepped on that BYU campus than me."

Dew was an A student. She played keyboards and piano in BYU-sponsored USO groups that toured the world and for a time considered becoming a concert pianist. She was a star athlete. But none of that compensated for what she couldn't do.

"By the time you hit your early 20s, you've had reinforced for you what you've always feared — I must not be very cute or attractive or funny," she says. "Whatever it is
that attracts guys. I still haven't figured that out yet. You see all your friends getting married, every size and shape of friend gets married but you. It internalizes in you that there must be something defective in you, . . . but at some point you have to come to terms with who you are in life. I can tell you when it started, but it's been a long, long process."

It started when she was in graduate school at BYU. Crushed by another relationship with a man that "didn't go anywhere," she packed her bags and drove to Kansas, showing up at home unannounced in the middle of the week.

She moped around the house for a few days and then one afternoon found herself in her younger brother's room, where she began thumbing through his journal. She read this entry: "My sister Sheri came home today. I was so excited to see her, but she seems really sad. I wish there was something I could do to help her because I really love her."

"I just started to cry," she says, "but it also triggered one of those clear moments of inspiration. I had a very clear impression that I should quit worrying about what I didn't have, because I had plenty, and that I needed to do something with what I'd been given. At that point, my view of the world started very slowly to change."

**Anyone for Game Boy?**

When you want to meet with Sheri Dew, this is what you do: Leave messages. And more messages. And wait. For weeks. When you do meet, it's at her office, between other meetings, which is where she spends most of her waking hours.

Dew has performed two full-time jobs for five years, plus a part-time job as an author. To accomplish that, she maintains a schedule that would exhaust a teenager. She goes to bed at 10:30 or so, and she's up by 3:45, sometimes even 2:30.

"I get e-mails from her at 3 in the morning," says her secretary, Nada.

Dew wrote the biography of LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley mostly between the hours of 3 a.m. and 7 a.m. "People ask me, 'Is it hard to write a biography?' I say, 'No, I did it in my sleep,' " she says, smiling at her joke.

During the day she hustles from one meeting to the next, dashing back and forth across South Temple between her office at Deseret Book and her office at LDS Church headquarters. When she isn't doing that, she's traveling the world as a representative of her church.
"I'm out of control," she confesses.

Dew's frenetic schedule makes her notoriously difficult to contact.

True story: Gladys Knight, the singer and LDS convert, was scheduled to appear on a celebrity edition of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire." Knight asked Dew to be one of her "lifelines," and she agreed. When the show tried to call Dew, they couldn't reach her.

"People ask me what's the secret to my success," says Dew. "I tell them I have two jobs, and I'm not doing either one well. I'm failing at both jobs. That's the secret. It's impossible to do both well. It feels that way to me. I feel like I'm always letting someone down."

As successful as her career has been, it is a total accident. Everyone she knew left BYU with a degree and a husband, and she expected to be one of them. When she wasn't, she was caught off guard.

"I looked around and thought, 'Now what?' " she says. "It had never occurred to me that I would need to support myself. I had no expectations about a career."

After earning a degree in history with an emphasis in American religious history, she was hired as the "lowest editor on the rung" at Bookcraft, an LDS-oriented publishing house, and got hooked by the publishing business.

"It felt to me like it had a great purpose," she says. "You could do good; you could make a difference. From the time I was a little girl I would go jogging on these country roads wondering what the church was like in the rest of the world. So when I started working at Bookcraft it felt like a way to help get the message of truth out."

She stayed at Bookcraft four years, then became a staff writer and editor of This People — an LDS magazine — for seven years. She has been at Deseret Book for nearly 15 years. Five years ago she was called to serve in the LDS Relief Society presidency. Over the years she also has written biographies for two church presidents and former Miss America Sharlene Wells and penned her recently released "No Doubt About It," even though she confesses, "I'd rather have a root canal than write."

Pop psychologists would say Dew is filling a void with her breakneck work schedule, but her brother Brad says, "She's always kept busy. People want to conclude it's because it keeps her from being lonely. If it does, it's a small percentage. Our upbringing is part of it, growing up on a farm and the importance of working."
Family and friends worry nonetheless about her exhausting schedule, especially considering her history of back pain and migraines (she takes medication for them).

"Her schedule is nuts," says Watson. "And most of the time she is ravaged either by migraines or back pains or vision problems. She just works through it. That is tough to watch. She works past exhaustion. At the end of the day she can go to sleep in 30 seconds."

"I'm actually not happy unless I'm insanely busy," says Dew. "I whine that I need a break, but if I have a day off I think, Now what? It's a sickness, I'm sure. But I have to find a way to relieve the pressure."

She accomplishes that with an hour on the stairestepper early each morning, riding a four-wheeler at her getaway in Midway and by playing Game Boy.

"When I come home at night, I eat, turn on Larry King and play Game Boy for 20 minutes and fall asleep," she says. "I would like to mention that I'm really good at it. I'd be happy to take on anyone in Tetris."

When Dew boards a plane flight for another long ride, she takes three things to her seat: scriptures, books and Game Boy. "My niece gave it to me before a long trip," she explains. "It's hilarious. Here I am, an older woman in a dress, playing Game Boy. The stewardesses kneel in the aisle and ask, 'What are you playing?' "

"Her de-stresser is not long walks or getting a massage, it's her Game Boy," says Watson. "She'll phone halfway around the world to give me an update, and I'm thinking, 'What's wrong with this connection.' It's her Game Boy clicking in the background."

'My best friend's wedding'

She came close to getting married once. She was in her mid-30s, and she was dating a man steadily. True to their religion, they decided they would fast and pray separately about whether they should marry. By the end of the weekend her suitor revealed that he didn't want to marry her — instead, he was going to marry her best friend and roommate, whom he had been dating unbeknownst to her.

Dew has never shared this publicly, although friends are more forthcoming. Ask Dew about it and she says, "I thought it would result in marriage. As it turned out it would not have been a good match, but it was the way it happened. That was such a painful part of my life. But I don't want to hurt those people. I still care about them."
Friends say it took her a couple of years to recover. In one fell swoop, she lost her best friend, roommate and boyfriend. Suddenly, she was coming home to an empty apartment and her best friend was off on her honeymoon. To make matters worse, she bumped into the man regularly because of her work.

"I've got to tell you, I think it was supposed to happen," she says. "I can't feel anything but grateful for that episode in my life. I think the Lord had to hit me in the back of the head to get me to dig deeper than I had ever dug before. It turned me to scriptures and prayer and fasting and the temple in a different way. I had no idea it was possible to feel so much loneliness and rejection.

"It changed forever, in the most wonderful way, my feelings about the Savior. I tapped into power that's greater than anything in this life. So it changed my life. I am sure I wouldn't have been prepared for my current church assignment without that experience."

Typical of Dew, she examined the experience and took from it every lesson she could find. One of them is genuine empathy for others.

"I haven't been divorced," she says. "I haven't lost my husband. But I have felt acute loss. I have felt pain. I have felt loneliness. And so when something happens to someone else that causes those emotions, I understand. Pain is pain." And here she pauses as her eyes well up with tears.

She also knows how to forgive. Do you know why Dew has back pain? Or why it's difficult for her just to stand at the pulpit? According to friends, when her former roommate was pregnant, Dew visited her at the hospital and took her outside in a wheelchair for fresh air. She injured several discs in her back while pushing the wheelchair up and down hills around the hospital.

In the end, as she recovered from the emotional trauma, Dew came to grips with her lot in life. She made her peace with being a single woman. "For my own sanity," she says, "I had to get to the point where I was willing and able to say to the Lord, 'Thy will be done,' and to really mean it. If you worry about it constantly, it wrecks your life. It's an ever-present issue, but I'm not distraught about it. I feel very confident I will get married in this life. But it doesn't look like I'll have children, because of my age."

Instead, she dotes on her nephews and nieces, taking them on trips to New York or to
her cabin in Midway. They are, to an extent, her family. She is grateful they have allowed her to be part of their lives.

And, yes, to answer your next question, she does date, but not often and usually only when someone she trusts has a recommendation. The exposure she gets as a member of the LDS Church's Relief Society presidency has brought a steady stream of letters from people wanting her to date their brother, friend, son, which she declines.

"At this age, to date for dating's sake is sheer torture," she says. "I began dating in 1969, which means I have dated in the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s, and now a new century, and I still haven't found the right guy."

Perhaps the worst side effects of her marital status are the rumors and ignorance it fosters. She has threatened to hire a man to put his arm around her during General Conference just to stop the gossip that she is dating one of the general authorities of the church. Visitors to her house at Christmastime will commend her for decorating her house and for putting up a Christmas tree, as if they are surprised she would bother — being single and all. Strangers advise her about whom she should or shouldn't date or chastise her for being "too picky" or for choosing a career instead of marriage.

"They have no idea how many times I've cried myself to sleep because of acute loneliness or the hundreds of times I've fasted and prayed to be married," she says. "If fasting and praying could get you a husband, I could pick anyone I wanted. At least let me be busy with a career and not sit around and be lonely. Would they feel better if I was checking bags at Albertson's? But the vast majority of people have been accepting and wonderful."

In public, Dew is ever the confident, independent woman, but in private she still retains part of the same insecure girl of her youth. She peppers her sentences with self-deprecating humor and painful self-evaluations — "The truth is I've never been one of those girls who guys see on the street corner and think, 'I've got to take her out.' " She still thinks she doesn't measure up.

"I still struggle; I'm still surprised if I find out that somebody thinks I'm OK," she confesses.

"One of her charms is that she just doesn't get it," says Larson. "She does not realize what it is people love so much about her. She does not see herself as wonderful. She is a
pure, honest human being."

Armed with the compassion and wisdom she has learned in the trenches, she is uniquely suited in her job as a representative of her church. There have been worse ideas than turning such a keen, sensitive heart and mind loose in the world to meet diverse people, to connect with them, to learn and observe, to extract life's truths and pass along to a church at large.

In her trips to Africa, for instance, she observed poverty, abuse, disease, starvation — but not the depression that's so prevalent in the United States. The people told her they were happy because of their belief in their religion.

"And we have everything here except sometimes happiness," says Dew. "I wonder who the Lord is really worried about — us or them? I have never heard people pray or sing as the people did in Africa. When it was time to fly home, I didn't want to leave. I was wiping tears all the way home."

For all the disappointments, Dew is living a rich life and she knows it.

"I love my life," she says. "I'm happy about my life."

From DeseretNews.com
The Dust Bowl

The Dust Bowl was a series of dust storms in the central United States and Canada in the mid to late 1930s, caused by a massive drought and decades of inappropriate farming techniques. The fertile soil of the Great Plains was exposed through removal of grass during plowing. During the drought, the soil dried out, became dust, and blew away. The wind blew the dust to the east in very large black clouds. The clouds made the sky appear black all the way to Chicago. Eventually the soil was completely lost when it blew out to the Atlantic Ocean. Beginning in 1934 and lasting until 1939, this ecological disaster caused an exodus from Texas and Arkansas, the Oklahoma Panhandle region and the surrounding Great Plains, in which over 500,000 Americans were homeless.[1] Topsoil across millions of acres was blown away because the indigenous sod had been broken for wheat farming and the vast herds of buffalo were no longer fertilizing the rest of the indigenous grasses. It covered parts of Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, and New Mexico.

It is well known that there was economic instability in agriculture during the 1920s, due to overproduction following World War I. National and international market forces during the war had caused farmers to push the agricultural frontier beyond its natural limits. Increasingly, marginal land that would now be considered unsuitable for use was developed to capture profits from the war. After the land had been stripped of its natural vegetation, the ecological balance of the plains was destroyed, leaving nothing to hold the soil when the rains dried up and the winds came in the 1930s.

With their crops ruined, lands barren and dry, and homes foreclosed for unpayable debts, many farm families gave up and left. Many of the displaced were from Oklahoma, where 15% of the state’s population left. The migrants were called "Okies," whether or not they were from Oklahoma. High-end estimates for the number of displaced Americans are as high as 2.5 million, but the lower value of 300,000 to 400,000 is more probable based upon the 2.3 million population of Oklahoma at the time.

On November 11, 1933, a very strong dust storm stripped topsoil from desiccated South Dakota farmlands in just one of a series of disastrous dust storms that year. Then on May 11, 1934, a strong two-day dust storm removed massive amounts of Great Plains topsoil in one of the worst such storms of the Dust Bowl. The dust clouds blew all the way to Chicago where filth fell like snow, dumping the equivalent of four pounds of debris per person on the city. Several days later, the same storm reached cities in the east, such as Buffalo, Boston, New York City, and Washington, D.C.. That winter, red snow fell on New England.

On April 14, 1935 known as "Black Sunday", one of the worst "Black Blizzards" occurred throughout the dustbowl, causing extensive damage, turning the day to night. Witnesses reported that they could not see five feet in front of them at certain points.
During President Franklin D. Roosevelt's first 100 days, governmental programs to restore the ecologic balance of the nation were implemented. The U.S. Government was to form the Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The human crisis was documented by photographers from the Farm Security Administration; among which the most famous was Dorothea Lange.
Helping Children Develop a Sense of Identity

California Tomorrow, a nonprofit organization focusing on issues of diversity and early childhood development, shares these thoughts on the importance of identity in the lives of young children.

Children who feel worthy and capable are more likely to be optimistic and to do well in school. A healthy sense of identity also helps children be more open to people from other backgrounds because they are less likely to fear differences or put other children down to feel better about themselves.

Having a sense of group identity as well as personal identity also helps a child feel a sense of belonging. Group identity is constructed in many different ways, such as belonging to a community based on religion, political, or social values, shared language, ethnicity or national origin, or the shared experience of being targets of prejudice. A group identity can come from whatever the child's family considers important in defining who is "like us." Creating a strong and positive group identity is particularly important when children are part of a group others value less.

How and When Do Children Develop Identity?

In the first few hours of life, children can tell one smell from another, one voice from another and they prefer their mother's smell and voice over all others. Attachment is part of the process of identity formation. As infants grow emotionally close to certain people, they associate how those people smell, touch, sound; in this way, they are able to recognize their "special people" early on.

After several months, children become aware of strangers. In the process, they become astute observers of differences and similarities. From their interactions, young children develop a sense of being valued and cared for. They also begin to imitate and later identify with others in their lives.

In diverse families and communities, children come to expect a degree of variation in how people look, feel, and sound, viewing such variation as normal. They understand their world is comprised of both high and deep voices, dark skins and light ones. Children spending their early years in more homogenous families and communities come to associate the human face, voice, and touch with a particular skin color or tone. By age three, many children can put their reactions to skin color into words. They not only notice their own, but also mention how theirs is different from that of other people.

Just as they learn about differences between colors and shapes, children are also beginning to categorize people. Many three- and four-year-olds talk about physical differences between themselves and others, between boys and girls, skin colors, hair textures, and eye shapes. By the time children are in the early grades, they've begun to comprehend racial differences consciously. The development of children's identity is tied
to all of this observation.

How Do Children of Color Develop a Sense of Racial Identity?
Children of color have a profoundly difficult task when it comes to developing a positive racial identity because they receive a double message from society: All people are equal, but some people are more equal than others. If children of color are not supported in positive identity formation, they can easily incorporate racist messages unconsciously into their view of themselves and others. This negative internal thinking limits children's potential, putting the brakes on the future, cutting down on options and possibilities.

When children come to understand that they, the people they love, and their ways of doing things are devalued, they can become frightened. It takes extra work for families to help a child feel safe, to learn to avoid oppressive situations, to know when it is and isn't safe to be visible for who they are. Parents face a delicate balance between trying to protect children from prejudice and needing to teach their children enough about the dangers to learn survival skills. We, who work with families, can greatly help by understanding that families are up against these kinds of challenges and offering support as they work through them.

Children of color often take different paths in identity formation:

- Some try to be like those who are accepted and distance themselves from the speech, dress, and behaviors of their families. Children who take this approach may end up feeling like outsiders in their own group even within their own family. And being an outsider is a lonely position, especially if the group they're trying to imitate won't allow them in.
- Some children learn to resist negative judgments about themselves and people like them and even fight against them. These children are often in environments in which the adults work actively to build self-esteem in children.
- Some children dismiss all thoughts of racism and avoid discussions about these subjects. These children are often in environments in which adults do the same thing where adults seem to believe that if they don't mention unfair behaviors, children won't notice it. But children do notice, and adult denial just isn't good for healthy identity development.

How Do Biracial Children Develop a Sense of Identity?
Trying to understand race and racial identity takes on another layer of complexity when the child and each parent all look different from one another. Children from parents of different racial backgrounds-biracial or multiracial children-develop their racial self-identity in a unique context. Biracial children have a better chance of growing up in an environment where a range of skin colors and physical characteristics are "normal" at home, where they accept, as a fact of life, the love between two people who look different from one another. But things still aren't always easy for biracial children out in the world.
In a society that often categorizes families by race, some biracial families express fears that their children will be misunderstood or discriminated against because they do not easily fit into one racial group or another. They fear that their child will be alone in a culture that has distinct places for people of different races. Many of these parents hope that their early childhood program will play a strong role in helping their children develop a positive racial identity-to feel their feet planted in both racial identities.

How can children who are adopted into a different racial group than their own "transracially adopted" be helped to develop a positive sense of identity? We know that it is important to try to connect children with their particular group whether it be racial, ethnic, cultural, or community-in ways that promote a positive feeling about the aspects of their identity that are different from their parents. Some adoptive parents are able to find other parents who have adopted across racial lines, creating a social network of families in the same situation so children know that their family isn't the only one where the children don't look like the parents.

It is important for children to know that not only do families come in many forms, but also that children arrive in families in other ways besides being born into them. Discussions of adoption and foster families need to be handled delicately and with respect, but they cannot be avoided if children are to accept and feel comfortable with diversity.

**How Do White Children Develop a Sense of Identity?**

White parents, and those of us who work with white families, may not always realize that white children also need to develop a positive racial identity one that does not rely on seeing white as superior to other races. Just as children of color receive negative messages about who they are based on skin color, white children receive messages that could lead them to believe that they are colorless, without a race. That seemingly neutral message can mislead white children into thinking that white is the standard and, therefore, inherently better. But a strong sense of racial identity should not be based on comparison-it grows from feelings of confidence and self-worth rather than from a feeling that you are better than somebody else.

Unless we help white children keep from thinking of themselves as "regular" and everyone else as different, they may develop a sense of distance from those they consider "others." Deep inside they may have a sense of entitled superiority, even if never taught directly that they are better than others. Unfortunately, despite having parents and teachers who try to teach them that all people are equal, children don't always see this message played out in the world.

Many things contribute to our identity-chiefly, who our parents are, the language we speak, what we view as our "community," and what we look like. Children who learn from the world that they are feared or looked down upon because of racism and other biases learn to feel shame about who they are. Some come to internalize negative messages while others struggle to survive the ugliness. As a result, however, not all
children get to grow up feeling good about their skin color, the language they first learn to speak, or the cultural traditions of their family. There are ways we can help.

From Scholastic.com
The religious affiliations of the people of Kansas are as follows:

- **Christian** – 82%
  - **Protestant** – 60%
    - **Methodist** – 14%
    - **Baptist** – 14%
    - **Lutheran** – 4%
    - **Presbyterian** – 3%
    - **Church of Christ** – 3%
    - **Mennonite/Pietist** – 1%
    - Other Protestant – 21%
  - **Roman Catholic** – 20%
  - Other Christian – 2%
- Other Religions – 1%
- Non-Religious – 17%

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
New Religious Movements  
By Daniel C. Peterson and William J. Hamblin

One of the remarkable things about religion is its tremendous variability. Throughout history there have been literally hundreds of different religions, with thousands of denominations. Today new religions are being created at an ever-increasing pace—possibly hundreds a year. In one sense, the modern world has been described as the age of new technologies, but it could just as easily be viewed as the age of new religions. Recognizing this trend, historians of religion are increasingly focusing attention on what are called “New Religious Movements” (NRMs), in an attempt to create explanatory models describing how religions are created, spread, decline, and eventually disappear.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the vibrancy of NRMs in the modern world. One important element is the impact of modern Western technologies, institutions, and values on traditional peoples of the Third World. In part as a result of colonialism and imperialism, traditional peoples often react to the West by creating NRMs in an attempt to balance the new and the traditional. Scholars estimate that over 10,000 such NRMs may have arisen in the Third World in the past century, sharing a total of over twelve million members.

But the religious impact of modernity is not limited to traditional peoples of the Third World. There are at least 2000 NRMs in the West as well. (Exact numbers are difficult to come by since most NRMs are informal and ephemeral.) Many scholars credit the rapid expansion of NRMs in part to the failure of traditional religions to give answers to the new problems of the modern world. In the past few centuries the rise of secularism and the separation of church and state in the West laid the basis for the rise of NRMs. The old ties binding religion, language, state, and culture together have been permanently severed in the West, creating a true freedom of religion for the first time in world history. And in this new religious environment, NRMs have thrived.

The most universal characteristic of NRMs is their vast diversity. Some reject the secularism and materialism that infest the Western world. Many are opposed to institutional religions, seeking complete spiritual independence; individuals can now create their own completely idiosyncratic religion of a single member. Syncretism—the merging of different religious beliefs and practices into a new synthesis—is widespread among NRMs. Many NRMs claim to have discovered lost ancient wisdom. This can range from the belief of having discovered the true nature of ancient Christianity to an attempt to revive the worship of pagan gods of antiquity in Neo-pagan and occult movements. Many NRMs are millenarian, forming communities in anticipation of
imminent apocalypse. Others are utopian or communitarian, rejecting the evils of modern society in hopes of creating new ideal communities.

Many people, dissatisfied with their society’s own traditional religions, have turned to the traditional religions of foreign cultures, which are often viewed as more exotic, more mystical, or more “authentic.” Thus, Asian religions have made significant inroads into Europe and North America. Although such Asian religions are often thousands of years old in their own right, they seem “new” when transplanted to the West, and thus function socially as NRMs. In the process of transplantation, the beliefs and practices of foreign religions are often transformed, sometimes almost beyond recognition.

The modern world is also one of increasing globalization. As literacy, travel, communication, and immigration become easier, religious ideas spread ever more rapidly. The Internet is also fast becoming a mechanism for global proselytism. Whereas we in the West often view this phenomenon as facilitating the spread of Christianity into Africa and Asia, in reality we could just as easily describe its impact in terms of the spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam to Europe and North America. Indeed, we will soon reach the point in the United States where there are more Muslims than Jews, with the concomitant potential for shifting political power.

Most new religions are small and transitory, often lasting only a few years, and seldom surviving the death of their founders. A few flourish, however, creating stable institutions and communities that lay the foundation for future growth. Many scholars believe that the most successful New Religious Movement of the past millennium has been the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, now with over twelve million members. If historical and modern growth trends continue into the future, its membership will exceed one hundred million in the twenty-first century. If so, the Latter-day Saints are poised to become the first world religion since the beginnings of Islam some fourteen centuries ago.

From MeridianMagazine.com
Spirituality's Potential Relevance to Physical and Emotional Health: A Brief Review of Quantitative Research.

by David B. Larson, Susan B. Larson

(Excerpt)

Longitudinal studies of community samples consistently find links between active spiritual/religious involvement and increased chances for living longer, pointing to the relevance of spirituality/religion as a potential health factor. For a large proportion of either medically ill or mental health patients, spirituality/religion may provide coping resources, enhance pain management, improve surgical outcomes, protect against depression, and reduce risk of substance abuse and suicide. However, study findings also show patient spirituality/religion may serve as a source of conflict linked with poorer health outcomes. Whether identifying helps or harms, research elucidates the potential relevance of patients' spirituality/religion, with potential for collaboration with trained chaplains as part of the healthcare team to provide spiritual support or deal with spiritual distress for particular patient needs.

During the past decade an upsurge of quantitative research has investigated the relevance of the role of the spiritual/religious dimension of life to physical and mental health (Koenig, George, & Peterson, 1998). A once frequently misunderstood factor among many mental health professionals (American Psychiatric Association, 1990; Larson & Larson, 1994), spirituality/religion emerges in research as an often beneficial source of coping strength in helping in prevention, coping, and at times recovery from physical or emotional illness (Larson, Swyers, & McCullough, 1997). Studies also show persons with active spiritual/religious involvement are at substantially reduced risk for substance abuse, addictions, and suicide (Benson, 1992; Koenig & Larson, 2001). Spiritual distress, however, can be linked with an increased risk of poorer health outcomes (Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2001), and misuse of spirituality/religion to harshly manipulate is linked with mental health harm (Larson, Larson, & Koenig, 2002).

This review article presents a quick overview of findings with substantial research references to help identify where to pursue further questions kindled from these brief highlights of the research. For example, for an extensive compendium of the research, the Oxford University Press Handbook of Religion and Health, published in 2001, reviews more than 1200 published studies in physical health, mental health, and social health fields (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001).
In this relatively new and growing quantitative research field of spirituality/religion and physical and mental health, measures of spiritual/religious practices and of personal importance of beliefs and attitudes are often less comprehensive than one might hope for in this multidimensional area. Some studies incorporate more complex measures such as detailed scales regarding spiritual coping or for assessing levels of intrinsic or extrinsic religious motivation. However, even with what may be viewed from a theological perspective as simplistic measures, significant links between spirituality and religion and physical and mental health are still found. The findings point to the important relevance of acknowledging spiritual and religious issues in fostering insightful healthcare.

Briefly summarized below are peer-reviewed published studies in the following areas that investigated associations between spirituality/religion and (a) mortality, (b) coping with emotional illness, (c) suicide, (d) depression, (e) substance abuse, (f) coping with surgery and serious medical illness, (g) health behaviors, and (h) negative outcomes. A brief discussion follows regarding potentials for collaboration between clinicians and trained chaplains, clergy, or spiritual counselors in meeting a particular patient's needs.