

Be Thou an Example

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You can share your testimony in many ways—by the words you speak, by the example you set, by the manner in which you live your life.

My dear sisters, both those of you assembled in the magnificent Conference Center and those receiving the proceedings by satellite throughout the world, I pray for an interest in your prayers, that I may rise to the responsibility which is mine to address you.

We have been edified and inspired by the messages of the Young Women presidency, the beautiful music rendered, and the very spirit of this meeting. We have received a renewed appreciation for the Prophet Joseph Smith, for his life, and for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

The First Presidency of the Church loves you and has confidence in you and in your leaders. You are an example of righteousness in a world which desperately needs your influence and your strength.

Perhaps your battle cry might well be the charge given by the Apostle Paul to his beloved Timothy: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”¹

Today, permissiveness, immorality, pornography, and the power of peer pressure cause many to be tossed on a sea of sin and crushed on the jagged reefs of lost opportunities, forfeited blessings, and shattered dreams.

Precious young women, and you mothers, Young Women leaders, and advisers, may I leave with you a code of conduct to guide your footsteps safely through mortality and to the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father. I have divided my code of conduct into four parts:

- You have a heritage; honor it.
- You will meet temptation; withstand it.
- You know the truth; live it.
- You possess a testimony; share it.

First, you have a heritage; honor it. There come thundering to our ears the words from Mount Sinai: “Honour thy father and thy mother.”²

My, how your parents love you, how they pray for you. Honor them.

How do you honor your parents? I like the words of William Shakespeare: “They do not love that do not show

their love.”³ There are countless ways in which you can show true love to your mothers and your fathers. You can obey them and follow their teachings, for they will never lead you astray. You can treat them with respect. They have sacrificed much and continue to sacrifice in your behalf.

Be honest with your mother and your father. One reflection of such honesty with parents is to communicate with them. Avoid the silent treatment. The clock ticks more loudly, its hands move more slowly when the night is dark, the hour is late, and a precious daughter has not yet come home. If you are detained, make a telephone call: “Mom, Dad, we’re OK. Just stopped for something to eat. Don’t worry; we’re fine. Be home soon.”

A number of years ago, while attending a youth gathering at the Clarkston, Utah, cemetery, where each of the group viewed the memorial which marks the grave of Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, I noticed another marker—a small stone in which was inscribed a name and this poignant verse: “A light from our household is gone; a voice we loved is stilled. A place is vacant in our hearts that never can be filled.”

Don’t wait until that light from your household is gone; don’t wait until that voice you know is stilled before you say, “I love you, Mother; I love you, Father.” Now is the time to think and the time to thank. I trust you will do both. You have a heritage; honor it.

Next in our code of conduct: You will meet temptation; withstand it.

The Prophet Joseph Smith faced temptation. Can you imagine the ridicule, the scorn, the mocking that must have been heaped upon him as he declared that he had seen a vision? I suppose it became almost unbearable for the boy. He no doubt knew that it would be easier to retract his statements concerning the vision and just get on with a normal life. He did not, however, give in. These are his words: “I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true. ... I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it.”⁴ Joseph Smith taught courage by example. He faced temptation and withstood it.

Many of you are familiar with the play *Camelot*. I’d like to share with you one of my favorite lines from this production. As the difficulties among King Arthur, Sir Lancelot, and Queen Guinevere deepen, King Arthur cautions, “We must not let our passions destroy our dreams.” This plea I would leave with you tonight. Do not let your passions destroy your dreams. Withstand temptation.

Remember the words from the Book of Mormon: “Wickedness never was happiness.”⁵

Essential to your success and happiness is the advice “Choose your friends with caution.” We tend to become like those whom we admire, and they are usually our friends. We should associate with those who, like us, are planning not for temporary convenience, shallow goals, or narrow ambition—but rather with those who value the things that matter most, even eternal objectives.

Maintain an eternal perspective. Let there be a temple marriage in your future. There is no scene so sweet, no time so sacred as that very special day of your marriage. Then and there you glimpse celestial joy. Be alert; do not permit temptation to rob you of this blessing.

Make every decision you contemplate pass this test: What does it do to me? What does it do for me? And let your code of conduct emphasize not, “What will others think?” but rather, “What will I think of myself?” Be influenced

by that still, small voice. Remember that one with authority placed his hands on your head at the time of your confirmation and said, “Receive the Holy Ghost.” Open your hearts, even your very souls, to the sound of that special voice which testifies of truth. As the prophet Isaiah promised, “Thine ears shall hear a word ... saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.”⁶

The tenor of our times is permissiveness. All around us we see the idols of the movie screen, the heroes of the athletic field—those whom many young people long to emulate—as disregarding the laws of God and rationalizing away sinful practices, seemingly with no ill effect. Don’t you believe it! There is a time of reckoning—even a balancing of the ledger. Every Cinderella has her midnight—it’s called Judgment Day, even the Big Exam of Life. Are you prepared? Are you pleased with your own performance?

Help can come to you from many sources. One is your patriarchal blessing. Such a blessing contains chapters from your book of eternal possibilities. Read your blessing frequently. Study it carefully. Be guided by its cautions. Live to merit its promises.

Now, if any has stumbled in her journey, there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Our Savior died to provide you and me that blessed gift. Though the path is difficult, the promise is real: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”⁷ “And I will remember [them] no more.”⁸ You will meet temptation; it is my prayer that you will withstand it.

Next in our code of conduct: You know the truth; live it.

After Joseph Smith’s vision in the Sacred Grove, he received no additional communication for three years. Can you imagine how you would feel if you had seen God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son, if Christ had spoken to you, and then you had no additional word or communication for three years? Would you begin to doubt? Would you wonder or question why? The Prophet Joseph Smith did not wonder; he did not question; he did not doubt the Lord. He had received the truth, and he lived it.

My dear young friends, you have been reserved to come forth at this particular time when the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth. Speaking of the gospel and of testimony, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “[The] thing which we call testimony ... is as real and powerful as any force on the earth. ... It is found in young and old. ... It brings with it the assurance that life is purposeful, that some things are of far greater importance than others, that we are on an eternal journey, that we are answerable unto God.”⁹

You have been taught the truths of the gospel by your parents and by your teachers in the Church. You will continue to find truth in the scriptures, in the teachings of the prophets, and through the inspiration which comes to you as you bend your knees and seek the help of God.

Remember, faith and doubt cannot exist in the mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other. Cast out doubt. Cultivate faith. Strive always to retain that childlike faith which can move mountains and bring heaven closer to heart and home.

When firmly planted, your testimony of the gospel, of the Savior, and of our Heavenly Father will influence all that you do throughout your life. It will help to determine how you spend your time and with whom you choose to associate. It will affect the way you treat your family, how you interact with others. It will bring love, peace, and joy into your life. It should help you determine to be modest in your dress and in your speech. In the past

year or so we have noticed a dramatic change in the way some of our young women are dressing. Styles in clothing change; fads come and go; but if the dress styles are immodest, it is important that our young women avoid them. When you dress modestly, you show respect for your Heavenly Father and for yourself. At this time, when dress fashions are styled after the skimpy clothing some of the current movie and music idols are wearing, it may be difficult to find modest apparel in clothing stores. However, it is possible, and it is important. The Apostle Paul declared: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ... The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”¹⁰ You know the truth; live it.

Finally, you possess a testimony; share it. Never underestimate the far-reaching influence of your testimony. You can strengthen one another; you have the capacity to notice the unnoticed. When you have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to feel, you can reach out and rescue others of your age.

To illustrate, may I share with you an experience which took place several years ago when Sister Monson had been hospitalized because of a fall. She asked me to go to the supermarket and purchase a few items. This was something I had not done before. I had a shopping list which included potatoes. I promptly found a grocery cart and placed a number of potatoes in it. I knew nothing of the plastic bags in which purchases are normally placed. As I moved the cart along, the potatoes fell out and onto the floor, exiting through two rather small openings in the back of the cart. A dutiful clerk hurried to my aid and called out, “Let me help you!” I tried to explain to her that my cart was defective. It was only then that I was told that all the carts had those two holes in the back and that they were meant for the legs of children.

Next the clerk took my list and helped me find each item. Then she said, “You are Bishop Monson, aren’t you?”

I answered that many years earlier I had indeed been a bishop. She continued: “At that time I lived on Gale Street in your ward and was not a member of the Church. You made certain the girls who were members contacted me each week and took me with them to Mutual and other activities. They were fine young women whose friendship and kindness touched my heart. I want to let you know that the fellowshiping you arranged for me led to my being baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. What a blessing this has been in my life,” she said, “and I thank you for your kindness.”

You can share your testimony in many ways—by the words you speak, by the example you set, by the manner in which you live your life.

May each of us emulate the Prophet Joseph’s great example. He taught the truth; he lived the truth; he shared the truth. You possess a testimony; share it.

My dear sisters, may God bless you. We love you; we pray for you. Remember that you do not walk alone. The Lord has promised you: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”¹¹

Tomorrow is Easter. On this Easter eve, may our thoughts turn to Him who atoned for our sins, who showed us the way to live, how to pray, and who demonstrated by His own actions how we might do so. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, the Son of God beckons to each of us to follow Him. “Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: ‘I know that my Redeemer lives.’”¹² May His Spirit be with you always, I pray, in His holy name—even Jesus Christ the Lord—amen.

1. 1 Tim. 4:12.

2. Ex. 20:12.

3. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. William Aldis Wright, Cambridge edition (1936), act 1, scene 2, line 31.

4. JS—H 1:25.

5. Alma 41:10.

6. Isa. 30:21.

7. Isa. 1:18.

8. Jer. 31:34.

9. “Testimony,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 69–70.

10. 1 Cor. 3:16–17.

11. D&C 84:88.

12. Samuel Medley, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” *Hymns*, no. 136.

