

Be Thou an Example of the Believers

Ann M. Dibb

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency



The small and simple things you choose to do today will be magnified into great and glorious blessings tomorrow.

I am happy to be here with you tonight and humbled to think of your goodness. You are an inspiring and beautiful sight. I hope my mother or Sister Dalton will sign my Personal Progress knowledge value experience number 4 because this talk should certainly fulfill the requirement of giving a five-minute talk on a gospel subject (see *Young Women Personal Progress* [booklet, 2001], 35).

I love young women, I love my young women, and I love the Young Women program. When I was a young girl, the Young Women program and Mutual were an important part of my life. I loved my friends, the lessons we were taught, youth conferences, and camp. My leaders loved me and taught me the truths of the gospel. They served as second witnesses to the gospel principles my parents had taught. My parents, my bishop, and my dear Young Women leaders were “example[s] of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). I willingly followed their examples because I wanted to be like them.

Thinking back to when I was a young woman, I recognize that I did not understand the magnitude of what was happening in my life. I did not realize that my participation in each and every Church activity was helping me develop a lifelong pattern and commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. I didn’t understand that I was being prepared for my future life as an individual, a wife, a mother, and a leader. I didn’t understand that as I tried to choose the right, I was honoring my baptismal covenants, exercising faith, increasing my virtue, and preparing to go to the temple. I couldn’t see all of this then, but in very small, incremental steps, I was becoming a believer—and “an example of the believers.”

Although we didn’t have the Personal Progress program as you have it today, we did have a very similar program. It included opportunities to learn, practice, and report our progress in living gospel principles. Recently I had the chance to reflect on my experiences when my friend and example, Sister Kathy Andersen, showed me her *Beehive Girl’s Handbook*. I’d like to share with you some items from Sister Andersen’s well-worn book:

In the area of “Love Truth,” you were to:

“1. Be courteous and responsive in class.

“2. Be honest in all that you do. It is important to gain knowledge in school, but it is also important to have honor and integrity and not be guilty of cheating. If you ‘pass’ classes and ‘fail’ character by being dishonest you have not learned the meaning of truth.

“3. Do not gossip or listen to any gossip this month. Try to make this a habit for the rest of your life.

“4. Notice the many nice things about members of your family and friends and tell them truthfully and sincerely what you have observed. They will like you better. Remember—no ‘apple polishing or flattering’” (*Beehive Girl’s Handbook* [1967–68], 59).

Even though what I’ve just read may seem old-fashioned, it contains truth. Young women “believers” must be courteous, be honest, speak kindly, and be sincere. These things may seem small and simple, but the Book of Mormon prophet Alma teaches, “Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise” (Alma 37:6).

Recently I have been following our living prophets by working on the new Young Women Personal Progress value, virtue. While that may seem like a *small and simple* thing, I testify that value experience number 3 has already had a *great* impact in my life. The experience requires study of Alma chapter 5; it then asks you to make a list of what you will do to prepare yourself to enter the temple and receive the blessings Heavenly Father has promised. (See *Young Women Personal Progress* [insert, 2009], 3.)

As I studied Alma’s words, I was humbled by the many things that I must do to be numbered in the Good Shepherd’s flock. The list I recorded in my journal includes:

“I must choose to be spiritually born of God and have His image in my countenance [see v. 14].

“I must choose to exercise faith in the redemption of Him who created me [see v. 15].

“I must choose to come out from among the wicked and be separate [see v. 57].

“I must choose to be stripped of pride and be sufficiently humble and walk blameless before God [see vv. 27–28].

“I must choose to change, repent, and accept the Lord’s invitation to come unto Him and partake of the fruit of the tree of life [see v. 34].”

In my journal I committed to do the following. Now, granted, some of them reflect my individual challenges:

“Read my scriptures with greater personal application.

“Be positive. Don’t whine.

“Show respect and refuse to mock others.

“Express gratitude, especially to those closest to me.

“Be more orderly to invite the Spirit in my home and life.

“Repent, increase my humility, and consider the spiritual condition of my heart.

“Translating Alma’s words for me, *I will change*. I will choose to increase my commitment to be ‘an example of the believers.’”

Because I participated in this “small and simple” Personal Progress activity, my testimony of prophets and my commitment to follow Jesus Christ greatly increased. Completing this goal prepared me to be more receptive to the Spirit the next time I attended church and the temple. Each time I review the words I wrote in my journal, I feel the Spirit and remember what I felt when I did this experience at my kitchen table. Alma chapter 5 is now one of my favorite chapters. Truly, I received many blessings as I did this, *my* Personal Progress experience.

Earlier I mentioned Sister Andersen and her *Beehive Girl's Handbook*. She is the wife of Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy [now a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles], a mother, and a grandmother. I love the thought that even though she has moved so many times, she has always known where to find her *Beehive Girl's Handbook* and achievement bandlo. Sister Andersen has stood by her husband and taught the gospel all over the world. She has also exemplified womanhood and goodness as a faithful member of the Church.

As an 11-year-old girl, Sister Andersen couldn't wait to enter the Young Women program. When her birthday finally arrived, she was given the *Beehive Girl's Handbook*. Sister Andersen explains:

“In the beginning of the book it said, ‘As a Beehive girl, and for the rest of your life, set your goals high’ (*Beehive Girl's Handbook*, 12). I could tell this was going to be a great adventure for me. I took my book home and immediately read it from cover to cover to see what goals I should complete during the next two years.

“I discovered that there were 80 possible goals to choose from. In my excitement, I determined that if I worked hard, I could complete all of the goals in my book—well, all except one: to go to the temple ... and be baptized for the dead (*Beehive Girl's Handbook*, 140). I [could not] be baptized for the dead because there [was] no temple in Florida.”

Sister Andersen decided to tell her father about her situation. Her letter continues:

“My father hesitated only a moment. We had no family in the West and no other reason to travel to Utah. He thoughtfully said to me, ‘Kathy, if you [will] complete *all* of the other goals in your Beehive book, we will take you the 2,500 miles [4,000 km] to the temple in Salt Lake City so that you can do baptisms for the dead and complete your final goal.’

“I worked on the goals in my Beehive book for two years and completed 79 goals. My father worked during those two years to save enough money to make the journey to the temple. My father kept his promise to me.

“Air travel at that time was too expensive for our family, and so we traveled 5,000 miles [8,000 km] by car to Salt Lake City and back so that I could complete my last Beehive goal. What joy I felt as I entered the Salt Lake Temple and in proxy was baptized by my father. It was an experience I will never forget.

“I will forever be appreciative for my mother and father's willingness to make the temple an important part of my life. ... They wisely understood that as I worked on my Young Women goals, my faith would be strengthened. My parents' faith and sacrifice in making the long journey to Salt Lake City significantly impacted me and the generations that have followed” (“I Can Complete All of the Goals—Except One,” unpublished manuscript).

As a young girl, Sister Andersen strove to do the small and simple things that would help her become an exemplary woman— “an example of the believers”— and that is what she has become. Each of you has the same opportunity. The small and simple things you choose to do today will be magnified into great and glorious

blessings tomorrow. Living each day as “an example of the believers” will help you to be happy and more confident. It will strengthen your testimony, help you to keep your baptismal covenants, and prepare you to receive the blessings of the temple so that eventually you can return to your Heavenly Father.

May each of us strive to be “an example of the believers.” May we live the gospel of Jesus Christ and do all that is asked of us, and may we do these things in faith, nothing wavering, with a pure and virtuous heart is my sincere and humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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