

Your Divine Nature and Eternal Destiny

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I invite you to center your life on Jesus Christ and remember the foundational truths in the Young Women theme.

Dear sisters, thank you for being here. I am honored to participate in this women's session of general conference. On occasion I have also been privileged to attend Young Women classes. But let me point out the obvious—I am not young, and I am not a woman! I learned, however, that I feel less out of place if I can recite the Young Women theme along with the young women. The profound doctrine taught in the Young Women theme¹ is important for young women, but it is applicable to all, including those of us who are not young women.

The Young Women theme begins, “I am a beloved daughter of heavenly parents, with a divine nature and eternal destiny.”² This statement contains four important truths. First, you are a beloved daughter. Nothing you do—or do not do—can change that. God loves you because you are His spirit daughter. Sometimes we may not feel His love, but it is always there. God's love is perfect.³ Our ability to sense that love is not.

The Spirit plays a pivotal role in communicating God's love to us.⁴ Yet the influence of the Holy Ghost can be obscured “by strong emotions, such as anger, hate, ... [or] fear, ... like trying to savor the delicate flavor of a grape while eating a jalapeño pepper. ... [One flavor] completely overpowers the other.”⁵ So too, behaviors that distance us from the Holy Ghost, including sin,⁶ make it difficult for us to perceive God's love for us.

Similarly, our sense of God's love may be blunted by challenging circumstances and physical or mental illness, among other things. In all these cases, the counsel of trusted leaders or professionals can often be beneficial. We can also try to improve our receptivity to God's love by asking ourselves, “Is my love for God constant, or do I love Him when I have good days but not so much when I have bad days?”

The second truth is that we have heavenly parents, a father and a mother.⁷ The doctrine of a Heavenly Mother comes by revelation and is a distinctive belief among Latter-day Saints. President Dallin H. Oaks explained the importance of

this truth: “Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them.”⁸

Very little has been revealed about Mother in Heaven, but what we do know is summarized in a gospel topic found in our Gospel Library application.⁹ Once you have read what is there, you will know everything that I know about the subject. I wish I knew more. You too may still have questions and want to find more answers. Seeking greater understanding is an important part of our spiritual development, but please be cautious. Reason cannot replace revelation.

Speculation will not lead to greater spiritual knowledge, but it can lead us to deception or divert our focus from what has been revealed.¹⁰ For example, the Savior taught His disciples, “Always pray unto the Father in my name.”¹¹ We follow this pattern and direct our worship to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ and do not pray to Heavenly Mother.¹²

Ever since God appointed prophets, they have been authorized to speak on His behalf. But they do not pronounce doctrines fabricated “of [their] own mind”¹³ or teach what has not been revealed. Consider the words of the Old Testament prophet Balaam, who was offered a bribe to curse the Israelites to benefit Moab. Balaam said, “If [the king of Moab] would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.”¹⁴ Latter-day prophets are similarly constrained. Demanding revelation from God is both arrogant and unproductive. Instead, we wait on the Lord and His timetable to reveal His truths through the means that He has established.¹⁵

The third truth in the opening paragraph of the Young Women theme is that we have “a divine nature.” This is intrinsic to who we are. It is spiritually “genetic,” inherited from our heavenly parents,¹⁶ and requires no effort on our part. This is our most important identity, regardless of how else we choose to identify ourselves. Understanding this profound truth is important for everyone but especially for individuals belonging to groups who have been historically marginalized, oppressed, or subjugated. Remember that your most important identity relates to your divine nature as a child of God.

The fourth truth is that we have an “eternal destiny.” Such a destiny will not be forced on us. After death, we will receive what we have qualified for and “enjoy [only] that which [we] are willing to receive.”¹⁷ Realizing our eternal destiny is dependent on our choices. It requires making and keeping sacred covenants. This covenant path is the way we come unto Christ and is based on absolute truth and eternal, unchanging law. We cannot create our own path and expect God’s promised outcomes. To expect His blessings while not following the eternal laws upon which they are predicated¹⁸ is misguided, like thinking we can touch a hot stove and “decide” not to be burned.

You may know that I used to treat patients with heart failure. Their best outcomes were obtained by following established, evidence-based treatment plans. Despite knowing this, some patients tried to negotiate a different treatment plan. They said,

“I don’t want to take so many medications” or “I don’t want to undergo so many follow-up tests.” Of course, patients were free to make their own decisions, but if they deviated from optimal treatment plans, their results suffered. Patients with heart failure cannot choose an inferior course and then blame their cardiologist for inferior outcomes.

The same is true for us. Heavenly Father’s prescribed path leads to the best eternal outcomes. We are free to choose, but we cannot choose the consequences of not following the revealed path.¹⁹ The Lord has said, “That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, ... cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment.”²⁰ We cannot deviate from Heavenly Father’s course and then blame Him for inferior outcomes.

The second paragraph in the Young Women theme reads: “As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I strive to become like Him. I seek and act upon personal revelation and minister to others in His holy name.” We can develop a testimony of Jesus Christ by acting in faith.²¹ We can claim the spiritual gift “to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.” Or we can receive the gift to believe on the words of those who do know,²² until we know for ourselves. We can follow the Savior’s teachings and help others come unto Him. In this way, we join Him in His work.²³

The Young Women theme continues, “I will stand as a witness of God at all times and in all things and in all places.” All members of the Church are needed as witnesses of God,²⁴ although Apostles and Seventies are commissioned as special witnesses of the name of Christ.²⁵ Imagine a soccer match in which only the goalie protects the goal. Without the help of the other team players, the goalie will not be able to adequately defend the goal, and the team will always lose. So too, everyone is needed on the Lord’s team.²⁶

The final paragraph of the Young Women theme begins, “As I strive to qualify for exaltation, I cherish the gift of repentance and seek to improve each day.” Because of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, we can repent, learn from our mistakes, and not be condemned by them. President Russell M. Nelson taught: “Too many people consider repentance as punishment. ... But this feeling of being penalized is engendered by Satan. He tries to block us from looking to Jesus Christ, who stands with open arms, hoping and willing to heal, forgive, cleanse, strengthen, purify, and sanctify us.”²⁷

When we sincerely repent, no spiritual scar remains, no matter what we have done, how serious it was, or how many times we repeated it.²⁸ As often as we repent and seek forgiveness with real intent, we can be forgiven.²⁹ What a remarkable gift from our Savior, Jesus Christ!³⁰ The Holy Ghost can assure us that we have been forgiven. As we sense joy and peace,³¹ guilt is swept away,³² and we are no longer tormented by our sin.³³

Even after sincere repentance, however, we may stumble. Stumbling does not mean that the repentance was inadequate but may simply reflect human weakness. How

comforting to know that “the Lord sees weaknesses differently than He [sees] rebellion.” We should not doubt the Savior’s ability to help us with our weaknesses, because “when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy.”³⁴

The Young Women theme concludes, “With faith, I will strengthen my home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, and receive the ordinances and blessings of the holy temple.” Strengthening home and family may mean forging the first link in a chain of faithfulness, carrying on a legacy of faith, or restoring it.³⁵ Regardless, strength comes through faith in Jesus Christ and by making sacred covenants.

In the temple, we learn who we are and where we have been. The Roman philosopher Cicero said, “To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child.”³⁶ He was, of course, referring to secular history, but his astute observation can be expanded. We live as perpetual children if we are ignorant of the eternal perspective gained in temples. There we grow up in the Lord, “receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost,”³⁷ and become more fully committed as disciples of the Savior.³⁸ As we keep our covenants, we receive God’s power in our lives.³⁹

I invite you to center your life on Jesus Christ and remember the foundational truths in the Young Women theme. If you are willing, the Holy Ghost will guide you. Our Heavenly Father wants you to become His heir and receive all that He has.⁴⁰ He cannot offer you more. He cannot promise you more. He loves you more than you know and wants you to be happy in this life and in the life to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Bonnie H. Cordon, “Beloved Daughters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 67; “Young Women Theme,” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).
2. See also “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).
3. See Romans 8:35, 38–39.
4. See Galatians 5:22.
5. Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 8. The jalapeño is a medium-sized chile pepper pod of the species *Capsicum annuum*.
6. See Mosiah 2:36.
7. See Gospel Topics, “Heavenly Parents,” [topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/heavenly-parents).
8. Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 87; see also Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; 132:19. Women and men cannot be exalted without each other.
9. See Gospel Topics, “Heavenly Parents.” Another resource providing information on this subject is the Gospel Topics essay “Mother in

Heaven” (topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

10. Even sincere questions about partially revealed or unrevealed truths can lead us to look “beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14). In particular, we need to rely “wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19), Jesus Christ. Suggesting the need for something more than what Jesus Christ offers effectively diminishes the scope and power of His infinite Atonement. In so doing we divert our attention from the ultimate “source [to which we should] look for a remission of [our] sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).
11. 3 Nephi 18:19.
12. See, for example, Russell M. Nelson, “Lessons from the Lord’s Prayers,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 47.
13. Numbers 16:28.
14. Numbers 22:18.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 28:2–7.
16. See Gospel Topics, “Heavenly Parents.”
17. Doctrine and Covenants 88:32.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
19. See 2 Nephi 2:5, 16, 26–27.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 88:35.
21. See Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 101–4.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:13–14.
23. See *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4.1, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
24. See Mosiah 18:9.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12; 107:23, 25; 124:138–39.
26. No one needs to do everything, but everyone who is willing can do something. Moreover, God can make the willing able, but He cannot or will not make the able willing.
27. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 67.
28. Joseph Smith taught: “There is never a time when the spirit is too old to approach God. All are within the reach of pardoning mercy. ... This doctrine appears glorious, inasmuch as it exhibits the greatness of divine compassion and benevolence in the extent of the plan of human

salvation. This glorious truth is well calculated to enlarge the understanding, and to sustain the soul under troubles, difficulties and distress” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 471). See also Boyd K. Packer, “The Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 28.

29. See Mosiah 26:29–30; Moroni 6:8; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
30. See Moroni 7:27–28. Remarkably, our Judge is also our Advocate.
31. See Mosiah 4:3.
32. See Enos 1:6.
33. See Alma 36:19.
34. Richard G. Scott, “Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 83. Consciously planning a sin with the callous plan to repent afterwards—in other words, preplanned repentance—is repugnant to the Lord. Those who do so “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh” (see Hebrews 6:4–6). This warning should be considered: “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation” (Hebrews 10:26–27).
35. See Isaiah 58:12–14.
36. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Orator*, trans. H. M. Hubbell, chapter 34, section 120; in *Cicero* (1971), 5:395.
37. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:15.
38. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
39. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–20.
40. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:36–38.