

Look to the Temple

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It is a privilege to stand before you today and share with you my feelings about the most sacred and holy place on earth—the temple. Like each of you, I love the temple! I feel humble in your presence because I know who you are. You are part of this noble generation of women who have been reserved to lead and change the world through your lives of covenant. You are elect women. Contrary to what the world would have you believe, you are not ordinary. You are not common. You are daughters of God with nobility in your spiritual DNA, and purpose in your earthly mission. The Doctrine and Covenants describes you when it says, “Even before [you] were born, [you] received [your] first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord... to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work, including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein” (D&C 138:56, 53, 54).

When I was a young girl, my grandfather used to tell me about the temple. He said that the day would come when temples would literally dot the earth. I could hardly imagine what that meant. Today we are eye witnesses to these events and temples do dot the earth. Brigham Young said, “To accomplish this work there will have to be not only one temple, but thousands of them, and thousands and tens of thousands of men and women will go into those temples and officiate for people who have lived as far back as the Lord shall reveal” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 394). Have you ever wondered what you did or who you were in the pre-mortal realms to deserve this honor, privilege and sacred trust to be on the earth now—living in this, the dispensation of the fullness of times?

When our children were young, my husband was away from home serving in the bishopric, and gas was cheap, I used to load the children into our little brown Pinto and take them for what we fondly referred to as “night rides.” I was desperate! It was my attempt to settle the children and make them sleepy enough to go to bed when we returned home. We would drive downtown to the temple and circle temple square. As the children looked toward the temple, we talked about the temple spires, the granite blocks carved by pioneers, and the angel Moroni. I would tell the children about the day that their father and I were married in the temple. They never tired of this

ritual or this story even though it was always the same. In fact, they corrected me when I would forget a detail of the story! As we drove toward home, I would ask the children, “Where are you going to get married?” Our little Emi would reply with her two year old enthusiasm, “The nemple, the nemple!” How eternally significant have been the days when each of our six children went to the “nemple” and were married. It seemed just a blink away since those “night rides” of their youth. I now believe those night rides, taken by a young, desperate mother, were a great blessing in our life because as we circled the temple, the temple encircled our children. It is the desire of my heart that all young women like Emi, will look toward the temple and prepare to enter there someday. That is why our vision for the young women of the Church is all about preparing every young woman to be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple. Everything we do in Young Women, every lesson, every value, every activity, every Personal Progress experience leads to the Lord and His holy house.

It is interesting because on those night rides, looking toward the temple also blessed and strengthened me. I found the words inscribed on the east side become emblazoned on my heart. “Holiness to the Lord. The House of the Lord.” What does “Holiness to the Lord” mean? I believe it means purity, righteousness and sanctification. In 2 Nephi, the footnote on “holy” uses the word “committed” to define the use of the word “holy” (2 Nephi 9:20). When we are holy before the Lord, we are pure and worthy and like Him. We are **committed** to Him through our covenants. We are committed to His plan of happiness, to His ways, to His standards. Our commitments didn’t start at the temple; they began in the pre-mortal realms where each one of us made a commitment to our Heavenly Father, and to His Son, and to the plan that was proposed by the Father.

Our pioneer ancestors knew it was all about the temple. That is one of the reasons the Relief society was organized—so that the women could assist in the work of the temple. They made shirts for the men as they worked to build the Nauvoo Temple. They provided meals. They provided relief so that in their poverty a temple could be built. They knew it wasn’t about possessions, but about power and strength derived from eternal covenants and eternal ordinances. They knew that they were on a journey back to their heavenly home. They glimpsed eternity. On the walls of the Nauvoo temple they inscribed in gold: “The Lord has seen our sacrifice, come after us.” They intended those words for us. They wanted us to make temples and the work therein our priority also. They knew that they were establishing the foundation upon which our exaltation would rest. They understood their identity, they were virtuous and pure, and they had a testimony of the covenants burning deep within their hearts. They were willing to give their all. They knew it wasn’t about an earthly home, it was about the temple. They knew the journey they were on. They knew that they would be strengthened because they understood the promises of the endowment and the covenants available through the restoration of the priesthood keys and sealing powers. I am so grateful to those noble saints, our ancestors, for their vision, their faith, their sacrifice, and their example. To them I would say, “We have seen your sacrifice. It is not in vain. We will come after you!”

As temples now dot the earth, their presence is felt. How do we commit ourselves and our lives in such a way that we qualify for the blessings of the temple? What can we do to put aside the things of the world and seek for the things of a better world?

First, we must understand our identity. In the Book of Mormon we are described in this way: “Ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers” (3 Nephi 20:25). Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Twelve said, “Once we know who we are, and the royal lineage of which we are a part, our actions and directions in life will be more appropriate to our inheritance” (*Thanks for the Covenant*, Russell M. Nelson, <http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=7033>). When we truly know that we are a daughter of God and have an understanding of our divine nature, it will be reflected in our countenance, our appearance, our actions and our priorities.

Alma tells us that we were “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of [our] exceeding faith and good works...” Not just faith but exceeding faith and good works! We had faith in the Savior, in the Father, and in the Plan that was presented, and we are here now to do that which we said we would do then. It is a divine compliment that you and I are on the earth now, in this the Dispensation of the Fullness of times. Today we have the gospel which has been restored to the earth. We have prophets and priesthood power. We have the Book of Mormon. We have holy temples where we can make covenants that will protect and direct us, as we have experiences that refine and make us pure to again return to the presence of God and His beloved Son. We have a great work to do.

We are not of the world. We are elect daughters of God who have made and must keep sacred covenants. No wonder scripture admonishes us to, “Arise and shine forth that [our light] may be a standard for the nations” (D&C 115:5). No wonder the Lord himself told Emma Smith that she was an elect lady. No wonder He also told Emma to “walk the paths of virtue” (D&C 25:2) and to “cleave to the covenants” (D&C 25:13). His voice to her was His voice to all of His beloved daughters. We are women who have been prepared and reserved to be on the earth now. We are women who have made covenants. You and I are “elect ladies” (D&C 25:3); that means we were chosen. Now the world won’t tell us that. The world won’t help us understand who we really are and our potential. Only the spirit will teach us these things. We must cultivate the ability to listen to that Spirit, and to screen out the loud and worldly voices.

We must be virtuous and pure in order to enter into the Lord’s holy temples and do the work we have been prepared and reserved to do. The Lord has said that “no unclean thing shall be allowed to come into His presence or his house to pollute it” (D&C 109:20). Satan knows this and he has launched his attack to disqualify and distract each of us from the work to be done in temples. We, as the Young Women general presidency, continue to call for a return to virtue. Virtue is pre-requisite to entering into the Lord’s holy temples. It is the only way we can qualify for the companionship and guidance of a member of the Godhead—the Holy Ghost. We must firmly set our hearts on those things that matter most. We cannot allow ourselves to become distracted, distraught or discouraged. Think of the transformation that could occur in the world through the righteous influence of each woman within the sound of my voice. What would happen if each of us simply determined not to be lured away from those things that matter most? As Nehemiah tried to build a wall around the city of Jerusalem for protection from the enemy, he said, “...I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down” (Neh. 6:3). He simply would not be distracted or lured to lower ground. Each season’s fashions get just a bit more revealing. Each season’s TV and movies get just a bit more risqué, and each season’s language gets just a bit more harsh. We can’t come down. We must “arise and shine forth” (D&C 115:5). We are women who have made

covenants that set us apart from the world in elegant, classy, beautiful ways. We are virtuous. We cherish virtue. We seek those things which are virtuous, praiseworthy and lovely. As women, wives, and mothers, our righteous influence and actions can and will change the world.

The Lord has made it clear that He desires to have a pure and virtuous people. We as covenant women are uniquely positioned to teach and exemplify virtue and chastity, and we must. If we don't call for a return to virtue, who will? Will you join with me in calling for a return to virtue?

A virtuous woman is refined because she understands her identity. She does not have to allow the voices of the world to define her. She is worthy to enter the Lord's holy temples. The temple provides the perfect pattern for such refinement. It is no accident that the symbolic color of the new Young Woman value of virtue is gold. Gold is pure and soft and it shines because it has been refined. When gold is refined, it is put under intense heat and melted into a liquid state, and then a material called flux is added. Flux causes the impurities to part from the gold. It is a refining process. The interesting thing about flux is that it has to be pure in order for this process to work. There is meaning in this process for our lives. We become refined as we prepare for and go to the temple. It is within these hallowed walls that we may "receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost" (D&C 109:15). Receiving the Holy Ghost purifies and refines us as if with fire. When we enter the temple, we make a physical parting from the world. Our actions, our dress and our language, not to mention our priorities are different- they are refined. Every ordinance and covenant binds us to the Savior. It is through His example and pure and perfect life that we are strengthened and enabled. It is because of His infinite Atonement that we can repent become pure and virtuous. **He** is the pure addition we need to be enabled to enter into the Father's presence once again. His Atonement is the basis for every temple ordinance. Every ordinance and covenant we make refines us and binds us to the Savior. In the scriptures the question is asked, "Who can find a virtuous woman" (Pro. 31:10)? I believe that may well be a latter-day question, and my invitation to you is the same as the prophet Joshua: "Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (Joshua 3:5).

Our temple covenants set us apart from women of the world. A covenant is a binding agreement between man and God. When we keep our covenants, the Lord has promised us spiritual blessings. As covenant keepers we act, speak, and respond differently. When we keep our covenants we also dress differently. Our covenants not only define us but they refine us. Why did the Lord tell us to "cleave to our covenants?" It is because making and keeping covenants will help us be worthy to hear and receive promptings from the Holy Ghost, and enable us to navigate successfully in an ever darkening world. It is because as "there is a protecting power available to us in the ordinances and covenants of the temple" (*Honorably Hold a Name and Standing*, Elder David A. Bednar, April 2009 Conference). If we, as women and mothers, want that protection from the adversary, it can be found as we keep our covenants. The dedicatory prayer of the Kirkland Temple petitions the Lord that all who enter the temples may "go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them" (D&C 109). These are glorious promises.

The sacrament we partake of each week helps us renew our covenants, and it is there that we covenant to "be willing" to take His name upon us. Elder Bednar taught: "The baptismal covenant clearly contemplates a future event or events and looks forward to the temple... The

process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ that is commenced in the waters of baptism is continued and enlarged in the house of the Lord. As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple. As we partake of the sacrament, we look to the temple. We pledge to always remember the Savior and to keep His commandments as preparation to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple and receive the highest blessings available through the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the ordinances of the holy temple we more completely and fully take upon us the name of Jesus Christ” (*Honorably Hold a Name and Standing*, Elder David A. Bednar, April 2009 Conference).

I resonate with the scripture in Doctrine and Covenants section 109 in which “a testimony of the covenant” (D&C 109: 38) is invoked on all who attend the temple worthily. I bear my testimony of these sacred covenants and the power that comes into our lives as a result. I testify that when we attend the temple, the promise of being armed with power and angels having charge over us is real.

Satan will not only try to discredit the work we are here to do in temples but also to distract us from that work. We may become too busy, or we may think that since all is not perfect in our homes or relationships, that we should not go. These voices tell us to wait, that surely if a son or daughter is not doing what is right, that we as their mothers are failures and not worthy of temple blessings. These are false and deceiving voices. We simply cannot listen to them when they speak. It is time to “run to the temple!”

Living the standards and making and keeping sacred covenants go together. So does purity and virtue and entrance into the Lord’s holy house. In the temple we learn everything we need to know and do to return back into the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Every ordinance helps us understand the redeeming and enabling power of the Savior’s Atonement. Moroni understood this: “Yea, come unto Christ and be perfected in Him” (Mor. 10:32)...

At the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni issued the final ultimate appeal to each of us to be virtuous and pure and to keep our covenants. “Come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift nor the unclean thing... Awake, and arise from the dust...yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; ...that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee...may be fulfilled” (Moroni 10:31).

My prayer is the same as Moroni’s—that we, the daughters of Zion, may “come unto Christ and be perfected in Him” (Mor. 10:32). That when He shall appear, we will be like Him—“pure even as he is pure” (D&C 25:13). I know that as we understand our identity and place in this matchless plan, our lives of virtue and covenant will bless generations. I testify of Christ. He lives. He loves us, and he wants us to return home. May we each look to the temple, and go forward, in the strength of the Lord. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, Amen.