

Our Body is a Temple: Representation, Respect, and Reverence

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As a temple is built, great care is taken by the architect to ensure a beautiful and enduring structure. Diligent planning makes certain temples are protected and beautifully adorned, inside and out. Key to the planning and construction of temples is the understanding that the temple represents the House of the Lord. We respect it as a sacred structure where only those who are worthy may enter. We reverence temples as the sacred ordinances and covenants in which we participate make it possible for us to return to our Heavenly Father.

Paul likens our bodies to a temple when he asks: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?"¹ What does that mean for us? As virtuous women, we have the responsibility to care for, protect and properly clothe our bodies. As virtuous mothers and grandmothers, ours is the responsibility to teach our children and grandchildren to do the same. I would like to address three principles that I believe will give a better understanding of WHY we are to take such great care of our bodies. These principles are the three R's of modesty: representation, respect and reverence.

Representation

First, representation. In order to know whom we represent, we must know who we really are. We must know and believe that we are literally daughters of God and that our body is His sacred creation and His gift to us. We must remember that we were valiant in our premortal life and fought for this opportunity to obtain a body and care for it. We must care for our bodies to fulfill our unique mission that only we can perform as women, wives and mothers. Some physical characteristics and challenges are beyond our control; but these have nothing to do with being "more fit for the kingdom."²

We must realize that when we are baptized into His Church, we take upon us the Savior's name and renew this covenant weekly as we partake of the Sacrament. We are His representatives here upon the earth. One of the guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth* states: "Through your dress

and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. You can show that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.”³

When one young woman read this statement and understood that she was His “representative,” she realized that perhaps some of her clothes were not completely modest. She made some changes removing anything in her wardrobe that wasn't consistent with being a representative of the Savior. She said, "I would be smart if I didn't even try on anything in stores that I knew I shouldn't wear. Why be tempted?" This young woman knew who she was and her understanding of the principle of representation helped her make that firm resolve.

Respect

Now, respect. With a clear understanding of whom we represent, we must then choose to respect ourselves. One of the definitions of respect is to agree to abide by certain requirements. The Lord requires that only those who are worthy may enter the temple, and that means we must be virtuous. Our choice to be virtuous is evidence of our respect for the Lord and the physical body he has given us. President Gordon B. Hinckley advised, “It is so important that we increase our efforts to teach our young women the ways of eternal truth, to make virtue attractive and all-important.”⁴

How can we make this requirement of virtue attractive and all-important to our young women? We must model and help them understand what Sister Dalton calls “deep beauty.” She described it as “The kind of beauty that shines from the *inside* out. It is the kind of beauty that cannot be painted on, surgically created, or purchased. It is the kind of beauty that doesn't wash off. It is *spiritual* attractiveness.”

Sister Dalton continues, “Deep beauty springs from virtue. It is the beauty of being chaste and morally clean. It is a beauty that is earned through faith, repentance, and honoring covenants.... We have been taught that ‘the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections. . . . It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features.’”⁵

So, what is our role in teaching young women to respect their bodies and attain this deep beauty? We respect our bodies. We agree to abide by the requirements, which keep us virtuous, worthy to qualify for the Holy Ghost and worthy to enter the temple. We model modesty.

I have been intrigued with the learning process of imprinting. When I say that word, you probably have a mental image of a mother duck leading the way with several ducklings following her every move, seeking comfort and safety. Imprinting is “a kind of learning in the very young based mainly on maternal attachment and acquisition of basic behavior patterns.”⁶ Scientists now believe that imprinting happens with humans as well as animals, and extends beyond their early years.

Mothers, you are the leader, the model, the imprinter. As you model and teach your daughters appropriate behavior patterns early, especially regarding modesty, they will be more likely to follow. Live the standard of modesty generously so there is not confusion. We can't walk the thin line between immodesty and modesty, because this gives our young women permission to walk the line and they don't have the spiritual maturity to know when they are at risk. Your role is to lead, guide, advise and yes, sometimes even enforce the requirements.

A few weeks ago, I asked my granddaughters who attend Brigham Young University, "What should I tell the mothers about modesty?" Two quick answers were given:

1. Tell *them* to be modest.
2. Tell them to have the courage to tell their daughters "NO!"

Elder Ballard in his recent conference address said, "As mothers in Israel, you are your daughters' first line of defense against the wiles of the world... You need to have frequent, open discussions during which you teach your daughters the truth... For example, they need to understand that when they wear clothing that is too tight, too short, or too low cut, they not only can send the wrong message to young men with whom they associate, but they also perpetuate in their own minds the fallacy that a woman's value is dependent solely upon her sensual appeal. This never has been nor will it ever be within the righteous definition of a faithful daughter of God. They need to hear this—clearly and repeatedly—from your lips, and they need to see it modeled correctly and consistently in your own personal standards of dress, grooming, and modest living."⁷

Sisters, what are young women learning from you? Respect your bodies and protect your daughters by abiding by the requirements to be that virtuous mother in Israel.

Reverence

Finally, reverence. Reverence is a deep respect for someone. As Latter-day Saint women, we have two opportunities to show our reverence to our Heavenly Father, and His son, Jesus Christ. First, weekly, as we participate in the ordinances of the Sacrament, and second, as we make and keep sacred covenants in our temples.

Elder Robert D. Hales said: "When we attend a Church meeting, our purpose is to worship our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ. Our clothing should show our reverence for Them. Elder Hales goes on to say, "When I was a boy, my mother taught me that I should wear my "Sunday best"—in other words, my best attire—to church." I was in a department store a year ago and a woman was looking for some "church shoes." The clerk clarified by asking "Sunday best?" Her reply, "Oh no, not that dressy!" Are we so pressed by the world to "fit in" that we have forgotten the purpose of Sunday worship and perhaps become casual in our opportunity to reverence our Father in Heaven and His Son?

Regarding our preparation to attend the temple, Elder Hales taught: "Just as the temple grounds portray the sacredness and reverence for what takes place inside the temple, our clothing portrays

the beauty and purity of our inner selves. How we dress portrays whether we have proper respect for temple ordinances and eternal covenants and whether we are preparing ourselves to receive them.”⁸

Representation, respect and reverence: three principles that we need to understand, model and teach to our children. As we come to know WHO we really are, WHAT is required of us, we will know HOW to reverence our Heavenly Father for giving us his most marvelous creation, our body. I know these principles are true and we will be blessed as we abide by them. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

¹ 1 Cor. 3:16.

² “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, p. 131.

³ *For the Strength of Youth* (2001), p. 14.

⁴ Gordon B. Hinckley, “Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, September 1988.

⁵ Elaine S. Dalton, “Remember Who You Are!,” *Ensign*, April 2010.

⁶ “Imprinting,” *Saunders Comprehensive Veterinary Dictionary 3rd Edition* (2007), <http://www.answers.com/topic/imprinting>.

⁷ M. Russell Ballard, “Mothers and Daughters,” *Ensign*, April 2010.

⁸ Robert D. Hales, “Modesty,” *Ensign*, August 2008.