

Young Women Striving Together

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To young women in all parts of the world, I care about you, every one of you, wherever you are. I believe in you, and I love you.

In these early months of our presidency, we have felt your faith, your strength, and your prayers. Know that you have our faith, our commitment to serve you, and our prayers as you stand strong in doing what is right.

To you—Maria, Anne, Alofa, Kristen, Michelle, every one of you in every corner of the earth, in every family, every classroom, wherever you are—who are striving for righteousness, join with a quarter of a million other young women in becoming a mighty force for good. *You* can bring light where there is darkness, hope where there is despair, and faith where there is doubt. But it won't be easy. I know that. You know it too. I believe it may be as hard, maybe even harder, than the struggles of our young pioneer sisters who pushed handcarts, suffered extreme fatigue, or were deserted by family or loved ones when they joined the Church. An account from my great-grandmother's journal gives this example:

“Almost a century and a half ago, the Book of Mormon was brought into the home of Susan Kent when she was sixteen years of age. After studying the Book of Mormon, Susan gained a testimony of the truth of the book that was so strong she could not reject it, although to accept it meant a great sacrifice for her. She was at the time engaged to a young man and felt she could not endure being separated from him, but he would have nothing to do with anyone who would join the Mormons. She did not count the cost; she chose the path of peace for her conscience, but her heart was so grieved that she could partake of no nourishment for several days. Then she lapsed into a coma so profound it had the appearance of actual death. Preparations were being made for her funeral until she awoke one day asking, ‘How long have I slept?’ With tender care, she slowly regained her health and with her sister Abigail, and their parents, joined the Church.” (Louisa Lula Greene Diary, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.)

I'll be eternally thankful to my great-grandmother Susan Kent for her testimony of the Book of Mormon and what it meant in her life and now what it means in mine.

Each of you will have a different and difficult kind of experience, but, nevertheless, an experience of personal sacrifice. Your challenges will require moral courage to mark a straight and narrow path for others to follow. Your challenges might be similar to Susan's. You might have to break an engagement or decline an invitation to a dance or a party because you have chosen to follow the teachings of the Book of Mormon and our modern-day prophet. This is a time when the influence of many movies, and fashions, and music, and fads would try to desensitize you so that the greatest and most dangerous hazards appear not so bad, and the loud voices of the world would be allowed to interfere with the whisperings of the Spirit within you and thus threaten your eternal life.

This very week, a young girl from Texas was telling of her struggle to be good. She spoke of the constant bombarding of evils made to appear appealing at school, on the television, in advertisements. There is hardly a corner protected from messages of immorality. “You simply can't make it alone,” she said.

Tonight I'd like to talk to you about striving together. You need not travel alone. In fact, you *must* not if you are to avoid the dangerous hazards along the way. When we strive together in righteousness with our families and friends, there is increased safety. Now, some families are more complete than others, but every family is precious. There are times when we need help from our family and don't even know it, and may not even want it, and it won't make much sense until later. Let me explain what I mean.

I remember one evening years ago, while attending a Sunday School party, I looked at the clock, and it was past the time I was told to be home. Just then a knock came on the door. I was horrified—my dad had come after me. I felt humiliated in front of my friends. I thought I wanted to die. I was not pleasant with my dad; disobedience never makes one pleasant.

A few years later, my friends and I were driving home from a dance across an Indian reservation, ten miles from any shelter. It was 40 degrees below zero, and the windchill continued to lower the temperature. A few miles farther into the blizzard, we discovered that there was no heat in the car. Then the car froze up and would not run. We came to a slow stop. We watched the snow swirling in front of us only until the windows quickly froze over. We were quiet and sober as we contemplated our fate—our lives were in danger. The silence was broken as a friend in the backseat asked, "How long do you think it will be before your dad will get here?"

Why do you think they thought my dad would come? One time I had thought I wanted to die because he had come after me. This time we lived because my dad came through the blizzard to save my life and the lives of my friends. This time I was pleasant with my dad—pleasant and very grateful.

This life provides many causes for disunity and strife. Evil forces are working relentlessly to have us bring contention into our homes over any issue and threaten our happiness, our peace, and our love for each other.

Some time ago a young girl came into my office. There was anger in her voice and hurt in her eyes. She came to tell me all the things she didn't like about her mom. I listened and listened until she got it all out. It was a long list. There was silence. Then I asked, "Is there anything good about your mom?" I waited. I think she had refused to let her mind think in that direction until that moment. I asked, "Amy, how *do* you feel about your mom?"

She raised her head, tears streaming down her cheeks. "She is my mom; I love her."

She had discovered love. Now, there is no magic formula. She still had to go home and work it out day by day, but she let go of the strife in her heart and she wanted to strive together with her mom. And that's exactly what her mom had been praying for. Miracles can happen when we decide to work together. In Amy's case, something of a miracle did happen.

It's okay that your parents aren't perfect; no one's are. And it's okay that they didn't have any perfect children either; no one's are.

You see, our whole purpose is to strive together in righteousness, overcoming our weaknesses day by day. Don't ever give up on each other.

Sometimes a daughter can rescue a parent in times of storm when she cares enough to help. I know a family with a dad who has had to move from job to job. In his kind of work, everyone is getting laid off. One day his turn came. He might have come home and called his wife into the other room and said, "My dear, we don't have enough money to pay the bills, and I know how much Julie wants that expensive sweater. I told her we would try

to get it for her. I don't want to disappoint her. What am I going to do?" There might be some teenage daughters who would have said, "But all of the other kids get new things. We deserve it. Besides, Dad promised."

But that wasn't the way it happened. Dad came home. He didn't have to say anything. Julie and her sister knew. Julie didn't say, "Dad what are you going to do?" Her mom told me that she put her arm around his shoulder and said, "Oh Dad, we can help." How do you think her dad felt? Do you have any idea how her mom must have felt?

Since that time Julie has been working two jobs, twelve hours a day, to pay for her tuition to college this fall. On the day her twelve-year-old brother would not be able to go to camp because he had no suitable pants to wear, Julie received her pay from both jobs. Her mom told me that she held out the money for her tithing, held back the portion she must save each week for her college tuition, and had enough left to take her brother shopping for the much needed pants. How do you think her brother felt? Do you have any idea how Julie must have felt?

Disappointment and sacrifice can provide the struggles that make you pull together, or become the enemy that will divide and destroy families. You will decide which it will be.

I'm convinced that if you will stop like Amy and think of the good things instead of the bad, you'll discover love that will bind you safely together with your family through all of the skirmishes that occur with loved ones (like having to share the bathroom, or the car, or the one nice dress, or whatever with loved ones who are not yet perfect—striving together through thick or thin). And, lest you get anxious, let me remind you that perfection is hard work and comes only a step at a time.

President Dwan Young spoke so beautifully of the meaning of our baptismal covenant. Each Sunday as we partake of the sacrament, we promise again to strive to keep the commandments so the Spirit of the Lord will be with us always. When you learn to listen to the whisperings of that Spirit within you and have the courage to follow those whisperings, you will become noticeably different because you won't be doing many of the things that are popular with the world. That won't be easy, but you can handle that.

Let me share with you the last lines of a poem written by my sister Shirley for her children:

*Listen to your inner drummer,
Step to its quiet beat,
The world beats another rhythm,
A rhythm of defeat.*

*We'll become a holy people,
Peculiar and divine,
Living in the world,
But walking out of time.*

There will continue to be strife in the world, but because of the covenants (the promises we have made to care about one another, and the promises our Father in Heaven has made never to leave us or desert us), we will come through the storm together to rescue each other in times of danger, even as my dad came after me. We will look forward with faith in God, having our hearts knit together in unity and in love one toward another.

We can do this. I know we can.

The evils of our day will increase, even as the wicked armies of Pharaoh threatened the children of Israel in the

time of Moses. But with faith in God, striving together in righteousness, we of all people have reason to take heart and rejoice. With our eyes fixed on heaven, we'll watch the Red Sea part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



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