

# Stand for Truth and Righteousness

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In the summertime, in the fall, the winter, and the spring, I think about young women. In the daytime and much of the nighttime, you are on my mind. I pray for help for those of you who are experiencing difficulty, and I pray for protection for those of you who are struggling with temptation. I give thanks for thousands of you who are striving to do what is right every day and are taking a stand for truth and righteousness. I'm so grateful for loving and devoted parents and dedicated Young Women leaders who help guide and protect you and who walk with you, cheering you on. These precious few years, from the time of your twelfth birthday until you are eighteen, are so vitally important, so critical and far-reaching, so essential to your happiness now and in the future.

In the wonderful book *Anne of Green Gables*, we gain some insight into this special time in your life. We hear Anne talking to Marilla, her guardian: "It's such a solemn thing to be almost fourteen, Marilla. Miss Stacy took all us girls who are in our teens down to the brook last Wednesday, and talked to us about it. She said we couldn't be too careful what habits we formed and what ideals we acquired in our teens, because by the time we were twenty our characters would be developed and the foundation laid for our whole future life. And she said if the foundation was shaky we could never build anything really worth while on it. Diana and I talked the matter over coming home from school. We felt extremely solemn, Marilla. And we decided that we would try to be very careful indeed and form respectable habits and learn all we could and be as sensible as possible, so that by the time we were twenty our characters would be properly developed. It's perfectly appalling to think of being twenty, Marilla. It sounds so fearfully old and grown up." (Lucy Maud Montgomery, New York: Avenel Books, 1985, pp. 186–87.)

Times change, but truth remains constant; and with so much importance resting on this time in your life, we can better understand and appreciate President Hinckley's message to the young women in which he said, "We pray for you. ... So very much depends on you." And then he added, "I am not asking for perfection; I am asking for greater effort." (*The Wonderful Thing That Is You and the Wonderful Good You Can Do*, pamphlet, 1986, p. 2.)

Many of you, most of you, I believe, are making greater effort than ever before. A Beehive class president recently expressed her desire, saying, "I want to be an excellent president and to serve the Lord more fully. I hope that I can find the lost sheep of the Lord's flock. I *will* stand for truth and righteousness. I will hold my torch high for everyone to see."

Do you think the Lord will hear her prayer as she and her counselors pray for each other and with each other in their effort to bring every young woman in their class into a circle of sisterhood that leads to a closer feeling for each other and love for our Savior? Do you think He will be there and care and guide and direct them? I know He will, and I know He will be with you in answer to your earnest prayers. You will make a difference. You are not too young. You are old enough, wise enough, and good enough to know what is right and what is not right and to follow the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. And you will know what to do.

On one occasion, a young woman and I went out together to visit a less-active member of her class. The young Laurel president said before going, "I won't know what to say." I explained that I wouldn't either, but in answer

to our prayer, our Father in Heaven would be with us, and then we would know what to say. As we approached the door, we prayed again that we could feel the Spirit and be prompted in what to do and say. The door was only opened a crack at first, but gradually it opened wider, and eventually we sat talking with the young girl. She was home alone. This less-active daughter of God gradually began opening her heart as she had opened the door.

“I don’t have any friends,” she admitted.

“How about friends at church?” I asked.

“Oh, they’d never take me back,” she said in a tone of despair. “I left the Church to be with a friend, and then he left me.”

At once the Laurel president—who said she was afraid she wouldn’t know what to say—reached out, touched the hand of her friend, and said with eagerness, “Oh, we’ll take you back. We’ll take you back.”

At that moment I saw evidence of spirit speaking to spirit with a message stronger than words. It was a message of love. The class president reached the heart of that young woman like no one else could. She knew what to say.

Young women, you are needed. Never before in the history of the Church has there been such a need for young women who are willing to sacrifice popularity if necessary, suffer loneliness if required, even be rejected if needed, to defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When you keep the commandments and follow the Savior’s example, it’s like holding up a light. Your good example helps others to find their way in a darkening world. It takes courage to do what you know to be right even when it is hard, very hard. But you will never lose your courage unless you choose to.

We live in one of the most critical periods of all time. The powers of evil are fighting against truth and righteousness, and the battle is reaching a climax. Someday the war between good and evil will be won—a permanent victory for good. But right now each one of you can fight for the right on your own battlefield by making right choices about what you will do and what you won’t do as you learn to listen to the promptings of the Spirit. Once you make your decision to do what is right, you don’t have to fight the battle with every temptation that presents itself every day. You simply take a stand and say to yourself, “I will do this; I won’t do that.” And Satan will have to turn elsewhere to find his followers.

One young woman wrote and shared an experience about a very special boyfriend. She told of his desire to persuade her to participate in improper conduct. She said: “I would tell him that I wanted him to be worthy to go on a mission. Every now and then, when it felt right, I’d say little things about standards or following the wrong path. A few weeks ago, I called him up, and I bore my testimony to him and told him why I say no. It was so hard. I hung up and just bawled. The next day I got a note from him, and in it he told me that I was one of the most respected young women he knew. I am so happy that I have the standards of this gospel and that I could pray to my Heavenly Father for the strength to handle these trials.” And then she closed with this strong commitment: “I’ve made up my mind. I will keep plowing right through all the trials that Satan puts in my way.”

In Christ’s parable of the ten virgins, each young woman had a lamp to carry. Today we, too, carry lamps. The light within is the Light of Christ. The Young Women logo, in the form of a torch, symbolizes this light. A torch will light the way for you and for others to follow, but only if it is filled with oil. I would like to tell you of three sure ways in which you can get the oil and add to it every day.

First, experience the power of prayer in your daily lives. Talk with our Father in Heaven every night and every morning. Tell Him how it is with you. In your daily prayers you might ask, “Father in Heaven, what can I do today to help in thy work?” You might simply ask, “What should I do or not do to be a better member of my family, a better friend, a better member of the Church, a better student at school?”

If you listen carefully, thoughts will come into your mind, and you will be surprised at the guidance you will receive when you sincerely ask and then listen. It may come as a simple reminder to express appreciation to your parents or an impression not to see a particular movie or listen to a popular song. You may feel the need to resist compromising or making excuses or rationalizing to justify what you want to do, or maybe the whispering will come in the words of a scripture you have read: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” (John 13:34.) But when you follow these promptings, a warm, good feeling will come over you, and you will know that what you are doing is right.

The second sure way to have oil to light your way is to become familiar with a few favorite scriptures and then gradually add new ones as you study the scriptures each day. We need young women who use and read the scriptures like letters from home to know what our Father in Heaven wants them to do and not do while they are away. By studying the scriptures we learn why there must be good and evil, why we must be tried and tested. We learn why we must choose for ourselves and why we must be responsible for our choices.

Young women, choose you this day whom you will serve. (See Josh. 24:15.) Choose to be obedient, not disobedient; choose to be self-disciplined, not self-indulgent. Shun temptation; listen to counsel; don’t follow the crowd in fashion and fad. Choose to follow the words of the scriptures and living prophets without compromise or complaint. We need young women who will not yield to unrighteous peer pressure or submit to immoral activities. We need young women who will maintain their purity, whose actions are the same as their beliefs, who can say with Job, “Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.” (Job 27:5.)

The third sure way to obtain the oil, the light to guide you, is to keep the commandments of God. As you look forward to going to the temple one day and receiving the endowment—a gift of knowledge and blessings to you from your Heavenly Father—you will have a firmness and a steadfastness in resisting temptations.

I know hundreds, yes, thousands of you, who are preparing and planning to walk through the doors of the temple, the house of the Lord. I hope that all of you will do this. Don’t let anything or anyone get in your way or distract you from that goal for even a minute. In the temple you will gain a clearer understanding and appreciation of who you really are. It is there that you will learn more about the Savior than anywhere else I know. You will learn about becoming royal leaders in God’s kingdom and learn what is essential as you follow the path safely back home to live with your Father in Heaven forever. Remember always that the further you are from the negative influences of the world, the closer you are to your heavenly home.

I hear of more and more young women asking the all-important questions about every activity, every date, every party, every decision, every video presentation, and every record or tape purchased. You are not wavering and asking, “What shall I do?” You are asking, “What do I want to have happen? Will what I choose bring me closer to my Father in Heaven? Will it move me closer to my goal, to my mission, to my purpose in life, to happiness here and now and also in the hereafter? Or could this be the kind of temporary pleasure that will burn like ashes and eventually leave scars, low self-esteem, despair, and regret?”

As you listen to the Spirit within, one day you will find yourself asking even a different question—not, “What do I

want to have happen?” but rather, “What does He want to have happen?” When we begin to want what we know our Heavenly Father wants for us, trusting that it is the very best for us, then we begin to experience a peace, a happiness that we have never known before. I know this. I can promise you this.

We see hundreds more of you who are earning the Young Womanhood medallion. It is a symbol of your commitment in the past as well as your commitment to the future. You are making greater effort.

Young women, mothers, leaders, let us all be filled—filled with the light, the strength, the faith that comes from prayer, scripture study, and obedience to God’s commandments each day of our lives. Let us stand united together, shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart, and hand in hand, bonded together by that light that never grows dim. We’ll hold our torches high that Christ’s true light through us will shine, His name to glorify.

God is our Father, and we are His daughters. Just think of that! He knows us and loves each one of us. To this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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