

“Crickets” Can Be Destroyed through Spirituality

Ardeth G. Kapp

My dear young women friends, tonight I want to be sensitive to your feelings. I pray that you will open your hearts and that the Spirit will teach you as I speak to you about some things that are very important, that need to be talked about at this time. I love you. I have great faith in you. President Benson has taught that “you have been born at this time for a sacred and glorious purpose. ... Your birth at this particular time was foreordained in the eternities.” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 81.) Even so, we have feelings of great anxiety for your welfare.

This is a glorious time to live, to be young, to face an exciting future; but it is also a very threatening and frightening time, if you are not prepared. And if you are prepared, there is no need to fear. (See D&C 38:30.) You are the pioneers of today and will blaze a trail into a wilderness unlike and perhaps even more challenging than that of the pioneers of earlier days. Your courage must be equal to, if not greater than, the courage of young women like Mary Goble Pay. From her journal we read: “We arrived in Salt Lake City nine o’clock at night the 11th of December 1856. Three out of four that were living were frozen. My mother was dead in the wagon. ...

“Early next morning Bro. Brigham Young ... came. ... When he saw our condition—our feet frozen and our mother dead—tears rolled down his cheeks.

“The doctor amputated my toes. ... The sisters were dressing Mother for [her grave. When my feet were fixed, they carried us in to see our mother for the last time.] That afternoon she was buried. ...

“I [have] thought of [my mother’s] words [before we left England], ‘Polly, I want to go to Zion while my children are small, so they can be raised in the Gospel of Christ. For I know this is the true Church.’” (In *A Believing People*, Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert, comp., Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1979, pp. 107, 111.)

Do mothers today care that much for the gospel and for their children? They do; of course they do. Mothers, it may seem easier for you to die in the wagon than to stand guard every day in defending and upholding standards of righteousness. It may seem easier to die for the gospel in an effort to save your children than to live for it. But live it you must, so that they will not die spiritually.

And young women, it may seem easier for you to have your toes amputated than to be a pioneer today and stand on your feet in front of your peers and dare to be different if their actions violate what the Holy Spirit whispers to you is right.

We are warned in the scriptures, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12.) Peer pressure is a form of persecution. Peer pressure is one of the great tests of today.

Do you remember the story of the early pioneers and how the terrible plague of black crickets came down from the mountains to destroy the crops of grain? Men, women, and children prayed and fought those ravaging crickets in a desperate effort to save their crops. The Lord heard their earnest prayers and sent sea gulls. They

devoured the crickets. The crops were saved. It was a miracle, they said.

Young women, you are the tender crops of today, the promise of tomorrow. President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught us that when we save one young woman, we save generations. Every young woman counts so very, very much.

In all soberness I ask you young women, mothers, leaders—all women—to consider the black crickets of our day that are trying to destroy our tender crops, not only our young women and young men, but many adults, also. We have been warned by our prophet that the “forces of evil increase under Lucifer’s leadership and the forces of good increase under the leadership of Jesus Christ.” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 87.) The heat of that great confrontation is becoming more intense. Sooner or later, either privately or publicly, we will all be tested. We must be prepared to defend our values, our standards, our commitments, and our covenants to stand as a witness of God at all times, in all things, and in all places.

The crickets of our day are different than in times past. They are powerful, more dangerous and less noticeable. Let me explain. At first, things may appear to be very innocent. Thoughts, words, and pictures are placed into our minds through very subtle and sophisticated ways. Thoughts come first and are then expressed through words. No one uses vulgar, crude words without first having the same kind of thoughts. Can you see how damaging such innocent beginnings are? If we are not watchful, the crickets will creep into our safe places, our homes, our hearts, and our minds. Through TV, radio, magazines, movies, literature, music, and fashions, these evil influences will aggressively begin their silent destruction, multiplying their forces as they go.

Television and video programs portray immorality as an exciting and acceptable act of love. Exposure to these messages of deception will dull your senses until what appeared alarming to you at first becomes of little concern and even acceptable. If this happens, that falsehood is unmasked. Your dreams become nightmares, and your hopes, destroyed.

Music has a very powerful and wonderful influence in establishing feelings and moods that can lift and elevate your thoughts and your actions. But because it is so powerful, it is cleverly used by the adversary to stimulate your thoughts, feelings, and moods, to pollute and poison your mind and cause you to do things you would not otherwise consider doing.

You want to be well-groomed, to look nice, and to be attractive. But you must be alert to the aggressive advertising of immodest fashions. Often the desire and practice of wearing such fashions begins innocently and early. Some mothers dress their little girls in ways that unknowingly train their appetite for the immodest fashions of the world, and when they are teenagers, the pattern is set and it’s so hard to change.

When the counsel of our prophet to avoid dating until sixteen is disregarded, I say that is crickets. Early dating gives Satan a foothold. Single dating at an early age is an invitation for the adversary to attack you while you are away from the safety of the group. Immoral conduct, alcohol, drug abuse, the addicting and degrading effect of pornography, Satan worship and other cult activities are all tools of the adversary carefully designed to enslave you and, ultimately, destroy you. The battle between good and evil is very real. We determine by the choices we make each day where we stand, what our values are, and whom we have chosen to follow.

Melinda, from Idaho, a young pioneer of our day, wrote about how hard it was for her to have the courage to leave her friends when they were seeing a movie that was popular but clearly against her standards. “Some may

think, ‘It’s just a movie, what’s the big deal?’” she said. “But it’s the little things that turn into big things. It’s not easy to do, but the Lord will help us,” she insisted. And when she left, others followed her. That’s pioneering.

Parents and leaders, I am convinced that most youth will respond when they see no faltering, wavering, or weakening on our part. Mothers, how you live will make so much difference in how your daughters live. Consider carefully your standards and practices because they will follow. How will our youth know which way to go if there is no standard that is clearly set and taught by precept and example?

I firmly believe that activities and practices, even traditions that do not adhere to gospel standards, can be changed. Young women, you can unite and use positive peer influence to help bring about needed change. There is great power to change when there is unity—in families, in wards and stakes, in neighborhoods and schools—especially when motivated by righteous principles. However, if unacceptable activities are not changed by these efforts, then choose not to participate in them. You can do that. I know you can.

The Lord sent sea gulls to help those early Saints. Sea gulls are not the answer for us today. But *spirituality* is. We live in a world where many voices and influences are attempting to deceive youth and adults. You might honestly wonder, “How can I know for sure? Some things that are so enticing seem so innocent at first.”

There is a sure way to know. Just as the Lord sent the sea gulls to destroy the crickets, He has provided safety and protection for you and me. Spirituality allows us to have the Spirit of the Lord with us, and when we do, we will never be deceived. He promises us, “I will ... be your light in the wilderness ... if ... [you] shall keep my commandments.” (1 Ne. 17:13.) Now listen to this: When you were baptized and then confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you were given the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost will help you recognize good and evil, right and wrong, and will teach you and help you remember the lessons you learned even before your earth life. He will strengthen you, comfort you, and give you peace. But there is something important that you must never forget. To have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, you must be clean; and to be clean, you must keep the commandments of God.

Let me say it another way. When we keep the commandments, we are clean; and when we are clean in our thoughts, our words, and our actions, we can hear the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. In answer to your prayers, you will feel what is right and you will be able to discern between good and evil.

Every right choice can conquer a cricket. Rebelling against the laws and the standards that God has given to protect us would be like killing the sea gulls to preserve the crickets.

Standards of the Church have been given to us to protect us and to help us grow spiritually. When the pioneers ended a day’s journey, each night they checked their wagons for any needed repairs. They united in prayer for continued guidance and protection and took a reading of both distance and direction to see how far they had traveled and make sure they were on the right trail. We would do well to follow the same pattern today. A good measurement to ask concerning every important decision is whether or not this decision will move you toward or away from making and keeping sacred covenants and preparing for the ordinances of the temple.

When you go home this evening and in the days to come, will you think seriously about what it means to be a pioneer today? Talk these things over with your family and friends. Make a firm commitment to be guided by the Spirit concerning what you *will* do and what you will *not* do. At nightfall review your actions prayerfully, asking Heavenly Father for strength for you to live righteously so that you will hear and feel the whisperings of the Holy

Ghost guiding you. Pray for forgiveness in those areas where you have fallen short and ask for strength to do better. When you do this, Father in Heaven will hear your prayers, and you will feel added strength and will become a powerful influence for good—a real pioneer!

I encourage you to participate in experiences that are outlined in your *Personal Progress* book. They are not just to keep you busy, but to build you spiritually. They are not tasks to try your patience or your obedience; they are experiences that will help build your spirituality and your testimony. In your meetings, pray for each other and with each other. There is great power in prayer. Young women, we call upon you to increase your spirituality by living righteously. Raise your standards high, that others might follow. You are the promise of tomorrow, the hope of Israel. “Rise in might / With the sword of truth and right; / Sound the war-cry, ‘Watch and pray!’ / Vanquish ev’ry foe today.” (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 259.) God bless you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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