

These Are Your Days

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When I was released as a stake Young Women president, I was surprised to find that it was camp that I missed most of all. I missed the fun and excitement of young women learning to appreciate the world around them, and the tender testimonies of those who had “never felt that way before.” I missed the young women I had grown to love. And I missed sleeping under the stars.

There’s something magic about sleeping under the stars at a Young Women camp, especially on a dark night when there’s no moon and the stars are bright. It’s a perfect setting for quiet talks about things that matter most and for music. No matter how tired the girls may be, there’s music—little groups singing somewhere in the dark as they settle in for the night—and, at times, the faraway sound of a ukulele or guitar. I found that sleeping outside keeps one closer to the action when someone needs help or comfort or counsel in the middle of the night.

It had been a night such as this that last year I went to camp. About the time the last tearful campers were tucked into bed and the camp was finally quiet, I noticed the first hint of morning in the sky. We had been looking for a place to hold a sunrise service, and because I was still awake, this seemed to be the perfect time to find it. So I slipped out of my sleeping bag and headed up a little trail through the trees. Coming up over a small rise, I found a grassy meadow where you could look out over the valley and the mountains to the north. I stood there for a long time watching the sky grow lighter and the clouds turn from grey to pink and then white.

As it grew light, the mountains across the valley seemed in some way to be familiar to me even though I had never been in this location before. I dismissed the thought at first, and then realized that I was looking at the back side of the same mountains that I knew so very well from a different viewpoint. These were the mountains that I could see from my bedroom window at the ranch when I was a child growing up. Many times I had watched them change color on stormy days as clouds would gather over them, and the rain came down the valley where our ranch was located.

Memories flooded back of my mother and father and their love for me. I thought of my Heavenly Father and how he had blessed me. As I stood there watching the sunrise, I could feel the warmth of the Savior’s loving, guiding hand. I knew without being told that I was a literal daughter of God and, because of the sacrifice of his Son, I can be with my earthly parents again some day and live in the presence of our Heavenly Father. I had taught this truth many times to others, but this morning it seemed as if I had discovered it for the first time. Perhaps I really had. I had received a witness of the Spirit.

Standing on that hilltop, I thanked my Heavenly Father for what I knew. And I promised to dedicate my life to his service. I can’t express the joy of that moment. I wanted to hurry back to camp and wake everyone up. I wanted to tell them who they really are, daughters of God! I wanted to tell them to have faith, to talk to our Heavenly Father—to stop worrying about little things or things they can’t change. I wanted them to know that God lives and watches over us, and through his Son, Jesus Christ, all things are possible. All he asks is that we do the best we can with what we have and stay close to him. I wanted to tell them, “You’re a daughter of God and he loves you. He needs you—every one of you! Do you know that?!”

When I got back to camp, I didn't wake them up. People don't listen very well when they're half asleep. I saved it for another time—for today.

My young sisters, do *you* know that you are daughters of God? If each one of you could only have a sure knowledge of this for yourself, you would have a sweet peace in your heart and confidence to meet any challenges that life may bring. There would never be a question of what to do when temptations come your way.

Many of you know what I'm saying is true. You *know* who you are. You have felt the Savior's loving, guiding hand as you have followed the promptings of the Holy Ghost and have found the peace I speak of in your hearts. People around you can tell who you are; they can see it in your eyes and feel the spirit you radiate as they associate with you. We have met many of you as we have traveled throughout the world. We have heard you make your commitment to stand "as [a witness] of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9) as you have repeated the Young Women theme in many different languages. We have hugged a lot of you and talked to many of you. How thrilled we are to see how prayer, scriptures, and living the gospel in preparation for temple blessings have become part of your lives!

Janalyn is one. Each year, for the Days of '47 celebration in the state of Utah, three young women are selected to represent the descendants of the Mormon pioneers. Jana had received national recognition for her outstanding community service and was among the finalists. As she waited on stage for the final selection, she found herself repeating the Young Women theme in her mind. She could feel that peace in her heart. She thought, "I can stand as a witness of God—even here, at this time and in this place." Her only desire was "to be at the right place at the right time to be the most help for the Lord to build his kingdom." When it was announced that she had been selected, they asked her to say a few words. She took the microphone and, even though she knew that many in the audience were not Mormons, she bore her testimony. The audience became very quiet as she said, "I fasted. And last night I prayed and told the Lord I would represent him if I received this honor. I'm grateful for this *calling* to represent my pioneer heritage."

To you, like Janalyn, who know for yourselves you are daughters of God and are living your lives in harmony with that knowledge, we say, "Carry on. Continue on the paths you walk." These are your days to lead out in righteousness so that others can safely follow and, along with you, prepare to "come unto Christ." (Moro. 10:30.)

To you who may question your worth and wonder if God really loves you, these are your days to experiment upon the word of God by obeying his commandments and staying close to him. That feeling of love and acceptance cannot come without obedience.

As it says in this little booklet, *For the Strength of Youth*, "You cannot do wrong and feel right! It is impossible." (*For the Strength of Youth*, Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1990, p. 4.) In a spirit of love and concern for you, these standards were outlined by the First Presidency to help you know how to make wise choices and experience the Savior's love.

They're summarized on this little card. Carry it with you all the time to remind you of the standards to live by.

To any of you who know you're doing wrong things, stop now. Repent. Come back. You can do it. There are those who can help you. Your Heavenly Father loves you and needs you, each one of you.

Young women, let your days begin and end with prayer. Read from your scriptures every day. When you pray and talk with your Heavenly Father, when you let him communicate with you through the scriptures and through his Spirit, you will find answers to your prayers—just as Dawn did.

When Dawn's parents received a mission call to Japan, she was given the choice of going with them or staying behind. Going meant leaving her friends, missing her senior year in high school, and, in general, changing many of her future plans. The decision seemed too hard to make. She said, "I spent a lot of time crying and wondering why this should be happening to me."

She fasted and prayed about the decision. It seemed coincidental that they were studying the Book of Mormon in seminary and were talking about Lehi's family. In the past she had wondered why Laman and Lemuel had such a hard time choosing the right. It bothered her that they were the older brothers and didn't set a good example. She began to liken herself to the scriptures. She was the oldest child in the family, and going to Japan was like going into the wilderness for her. She would have to leave a lot of important things behind. She said, "I didn't want to be a Laman or Lemuel. I wanted to obey my Father in Heaven and do his will." She knew her decision was right when she told her parents she would love to go to Japan with them and it felt so good.

At the farewell, Dawn told her friends how much she loved them and would miss them, then said, "I realize that the greatest friend I have is Jesus Christ. I feel of his love every day."

These are your days to look to the scriptures for guidance and to build a closer relationship with the Savior through prayer. He can become *your* best friend. Through him you can know for yourself that you are a daughter of God. He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And you are his sister. Think of that!

What an exciting time to live—at this great moment in history when the gospel has been restored in its fulness and borders of nations are opening in dramatic ways to allow the gospel message to spread forth!

Young women, these are your days to prepare to do your part—to take your place in the great forward movement that is rolling across the earth like a mighty wave. Prayer, scripture study, and obedience to the commandments will prepare you to lead out in righteousness for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As the Young Women general presidency, we call on you to unite in your wards and branches, to love one another, to gain strength from one another. We call on you to stand together and lead out for morality, to speak against the evil forces of the world. Will you stand for truth and righteousness and lead others who will follow if you will show the way? Will you stand as a witness for our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ?

Hear the words of President Ardeh G. Kapp.

"I can hear a growing chorus of young women's voices reaching out across the land and across the water and heavenward, responding to the call for righteous young women. I see you standing strong and firm in your faith ... filled with the joy of discovery and youth. Caught up in the excitement of doing good deeds and making wise choices. Learning, growing and feeling at home with the beauties of the world. Reaching out and gathering those who may be weaker. Rallying together, gathering strength as the Young Women Values become a part of your life ... gathering strength as young women like yourself come together from the mountains, the valleys, the islands of the sea, from arid deserts, and tropical rain forests ... wherever the seeds of the gospel have been sown.

“Reach out to others in a great bond of sisterhood. Unite in righteousness. Hold your banners high for all to see. Don’t be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for you have a cause and the cause is glorious!” (Young Women fireside, 10 Nov. 1985.)

“Look to this day. Arise in all your splendor, and bear the standards of the world-to-be.” (Maude Osmond Cook, cited in *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 32.)

We honor you, we pray for you, we love you. May God bless you. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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