

Stand Firm in the Faith

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President of the Church

My beloved sisters, I commend to you the counsel you have received this evening from the Relief Society general presidency. I greet you in love and respect, knowing that you are daughters of our Heavenly Father and knowing what each of you has the potential to become.

In behalf of the general officers of the Church, I thank you for the service you render to the Church, to your families, and to the neighborhoods and communities in which you live. I recognize that many of your unselfish and compassionate deeds are unknown, unheralded, and at times unthanked. However, the Lord is mindful of you.

We pray for your welfare. We thank God for the refining influence you have upon our world through your service, sacrifice, compassion, and striving for that which is beautiful and ennobling.

Thank you for making our lives so much better because of who you are. Your steady example of righteousness stands in contrast to the ways of the world.

Many today struggle with the challenges of life. Given the perplexities, turmoil, and evils that are about us, it is natural for us to reach out for someone who can help. Some women long for that inspiration which can comfort the heart, bind the wounds, and give knowledge sufficient to point the way when there seems no reliable way to turn.

But we are not left comfortless! We have the scriptures, which contain enduring words of a loving Father in Heaven, who tells us that we are his first priority. He said, “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

In addition to those words of a loving Father in Heaven, we have the Savior, of whom Alma recorded:

“And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind. ...

“And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12).

It must be comforting to you beloved sisters of his church to remember that this same Jesus, our Savior through the Atonement, demonstrated his love and concern for the women of his time. He honored the poor widow who gave two mites. He taught the woman of Samaria and revealed to her that he was the Messiah. He cast out seven devils from Mary Magdalene and forgave the woman taken in adultery. He healed the daughter of the Greek woman, he healed the woman stooped and bent for eighteen years, and he healed Peter’s mother when she was sick with a fever.

He restored the dead son to his mother, the daughter of Jairus to her parents, and Lazarus to his grieving sisters, whom he counted among his closest friends. As he hung on the cross, his heart went out to his mother, and he placed her in the care of his beloved disciple, John. Women prepared his body for burial. It was Mary to whom

he first appeared as the resurrected Lord, and it was she to whom he entrusted the delivery of the glorious message to his disciples that he had risen.

Is there any reason to think that he cares any less about women today? Before his ascension, he promised his disciples: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter. ... I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:16, 18). As daughters of our Heavenly Father, you also are privileged to have been given that other Comforter as well, the gift of the Holy Ghost.

As our Lord and Savior looked to the women of his time for a comforting hand, a listening ear, a believing heart, a kind look, an encouraging word, loyalty—even in his hour of humiliation, agony, and death—it seems to me that there is a great need to rally the women of the Church today to stand with and for the Brethren in stemming the tide of evil that surrounds us and in moving forward the work of our Savior. Together we must stand firm in the faith against greater numbers of other-minded people. Nephi said, “Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men” (2 Ne. 31:20). When we are obedient to God, we are a majority. But only together can we accomplish the work he has given us to do and be prepared for the day when we shall see him.

As we labor with our might to minister to needs in the same caring way that our Lord did among the women of his day, so we entreat you to minister with your powerful influence for good in strengthening our families, our church, and our communities. As you are anxiously engaged in good causes, you can show others that by taking Christ into their lives and accepting his gospel, with its saving ordinances and covenants, they can reach their true potential in this life and in the hereafter.

Those who follow Christ seek to follow his example. His suffering in behalf of our sins, shortcomings, sorrows, and sicknesses should motivate us to similarly reach out in charity and compassion to those around us. It is most appropriate that the motto of the longest-standing women’s organization in the world—the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is “Charity Never Faileth.”

In a previous general meeting of the women of the Church, President Spencer W. Kimball counseled:

“Bear in mind, dear sisters, that the eternal blessings which are yours through membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are far, far greater than any other blessings you could possibly receive. No greater recognition can come to you in this world than to be known as a woman of God” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 102).

You are chosen to be faithful women of God in our day, to stand above pettiness, gossip, selfishness, lewdness, and all other forms of ungodliness.

Recognize your divine birthright as daughters of our Heavenly Father. Be one who heals with your words as well as your hands. Seek to know the will of the Lord in your life, and then say, as did that wonderful exemplar Mary, the mother of Jesus, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38).

My beloved sisters, I know that God lives, that Jesus is his Only Begotten Son, the Savior of the world. I know that this is the Church of Jesus Christ. He is at its head. He reveals his will to his prophets. I testify also of the truthfulness and eternal nature of your honored place as women.

May the Lord bless you as you stand firm in the faith, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

