

12. Proverbs 28:13.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:32; italics added.
14. Alma 38:8.
15. See Alma 11:40; 2 Nephi 9:22-24.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
17. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), p. 353.
18. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 85.
19. Helaman 3:35.

Sister Bonnie D. Parkin

Celebrating covenants

President Hinckley, as a leader of the young women of the Church, may I speak for them in saying we love, support, and sustain you as our prophet.

Dear brothers and sisters, standing here so soon after my call is much like being thrown into a mountain lake of glacial runoff—I am still getting used to the shock. You see, I am the mother of sons. Four sons. That's right. Sons. You'd think that I would have been called to be the general den mother. Instead, my long desire for daughters has been filled twice: first with four fantastic daughters-in-law, and second with half a million young women around the world. Each one is unique and individually numbered and known in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. How do I know this? Because Heavenly Father has reached His tender hand from the heavens to hold and help me, Bonnie Parkin. Because the light of His Son has warmed my soul. Because I have made promises and covenants that have transformed my life as I've kept them.

Have covenants renewed your life? Do you celebrate them?

Celebrating a granddaughter's blessing

Recently we went to Pasadena, California, to the blessing of our first granddaughter, Jordan Emily. This was a unique experience for two reasons: First, my husband and I thought the Parkins were unable to have girls. And second, this blessing was the first official step

in her mortality as a daughter of God. We feel so much joy as we anticipate the potential her life holds here.

Jordan was fortunate. She was born to her parents who were sealed in the temple under the new and everlasting covenant. Provided her parents remain true to this agreement, Jordan will be beneficiary to those covenants by being in a home filled mostly with peace, love, protection, and understanding. Being born in the covenant is not the privilege of all members of the Church, but the blessings of the covenant will be made available to all who are worthy of them.

We hope little Jordan's life as a faithful Latter-day Saint will move from a baby receiving a priesthood blessing, to a child of God receiving baptismal covenants, to a young woman keeping those first promises and preparing to be worthy and qualified to make and keep sacred covenants, to a woman entering into temple covenants, to a wife being sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and finally to an exalted daughter returning home to our Heavenly Father's open arms. This is our journey as Saints.

What are covenants?

So often we talk of making and keeping covenants, but exactly what are they? At baptism we demonstrate that we "are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; . . . mourn with those that mourn; . . . comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and . . . stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah

18:8-9). And that's just the beginning! In the temple we further covenant to be obedient, to sacrifice, to keep ourselves worthily pure, to contribute to the spreading of truth, to be chaste, to pray, to live the gospel, and to be forever faithful.

Heaven's emphasis is on individuals

Father in Heaven knows us as individuals. The covenants we make with Him are performed one-on-one. President Howard W. Hunter noted:

"I have always been impressed that the Lord deals with us personally, individually. We do many things in groups in the Church, . . . but . . . the *most* important things . . . are done individually. We bless babies one at a time, even if they are twins or triplets. We baptize and confirm children one at a time. We take the sacrament, are ordained to the priesthood, or move through the ordinances of the temple as individuals—as one person developing a [personal] relationship with our Father in Heaven. . . . *Heaven's emphasis is on each individual, on every single person*" ("Eternal Investments" [address to CES religious educators, 10 Feb. 1989], p. 4; italics added).

Covenants should bless our daily lives

These individual commitments made directly with our Heavenly Father are things to celebrate and consecrate! Do you remember what happened when Alma invited his people to make these covenants? They celebrated! They "clapped their hands with joy." I wonder why our covenants so often feel more like obligations than privileges.

How did you feel the last time you partook of the sacrament? Did you ponder those covenants made in fonts and within temples? The sacrament enables us to renew our covenants. Thus, if we keep those covenants with honor and exactness, we can feel as fresh and as pure as we did when we were first bap-

tized. We can feel as committed to a temple sealing as we did as a new bride or groom. We can feel as loved of God as our sweet little Jordan did when she received her name and blessing. Covenants keep us new.

Do those covenants change the actions of our *daily* lives? They should, even though it may be a struggle to keep them.

Covenants anchor us during adversity

We hear of Saints who hold on to their covenants even against great odds and in so doing find renewal and peace—not just in the life to come but in *this* life—because just like covenant breaking, covenant keeping becomes habit-forming.

We have all been victims of evil and unrighteousness, pain and suffering. I know a woman who was a victim. Her husband chose to be unfaithful to her. She suffered and she was in pain. It took many years, but life got better for her because she remained faithful to her covenants.

There are both stormy seas and calm waters in life. But as Ether tells us, "Hope cometh of faith, [and] maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God" (Ether 12:4). Covenants anchor us to solid ground, which, amidst the storms, makes our promises *not only meaningful for eternity but vital for today*. Have your covenants moved you to sing the song of redeeming love?

Helping youth keep covenants

At a Relief Society meeting a group of women were discussing how to teach youth to make and keep covenants. One woman, who was struggling with a teenage daughter, listened as the women talked about faith, prayer, good example, and scriptures. Finally she blurted

out, "I've tried all those things! And they're not working!" Quietly she added, "Love is all that is working for us right now." This good sister trusted that somehow her covenant to be charitable (even to her daughter) would make a difference. And it is.

Another young woman, Katie, was at camp. She felt angry and abandoned because of overwhelming family problems. Her testimony teetered in serious jeopardy. But a concerned leader, in an effort to live up to his holy calling, wrote Katie a note saying, "I love you. I believe in you. You have a testimony, because I have heard you bear it in these ways." Then he listed those ways. The note arrived at the right time; Katie was strengthened to live *her* covenants because someone else strived to live his.

Mark, a high school student in my ward, recently stood in fast meeting and talked about how he was finding strength to live his covenants. He summed it up with this formula succinctly and memorably. He said, "A scripture a day keeps Satan away."

Blessings of covenant keeping

What are the rewards of covenant keeping? Gentle-hearted King Benjamin said: "Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ. . . . And under this head ye are made free" (Mosiah 5:7-8). And we will "be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that [we] may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:9).

Brothers and sisters, covenant keeping will help you recall the One with whom you're yoked, and your burden will be lighter.

If you have slipped in your covenants, take heart! The Savior so wants us to fulfill our promises that He has provided an everlasting atonement. If your heart is not singing the song of re-

deeming love, return to your covenants. Celebrate them. Like our new granddaughter, you too can be pure. The renewal of your covenants will awaken you like cold glacial waters on a hot day. Then remember, millions of Church members all around the globe are daily keeping covenants against all odds. *You can too.*

If you remember only one thing I say today, remember to *hold on to your covenants and celebrate them*. My covenants are an expression of my faith; they are why I stand before you today. Covenants help me focus on the big picture and not just on the immediate. As my sons have served missions, I have seen covenants further the work of the Lord. Covenants help me make a difference in the lives of others. My covenants are not negotiable. They make the choice of righteousness easier. I humbly pray that our covenants might become a greater source of celebration and strength in our lives; that we may walk uprightly and steadfastly, that when we most need the Lord's hand, it will be there waiting warmly. I treasure the covenants He has made with me and with all my heart hope to live faithful to them. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Now Let Us Rejoice," after which Elder Andrew W. Peterson, who was sustained at October conference as a member of the Seventy, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."
