

Steadfast and Immovable

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We cannot abandon our faith when challenges comes our way. We will not turn away; we will not retreat; we will not become discouraged.

Some people and events come into our lives, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never the same.

Tonight, as a presidency, our prayers are that the words spoken here this evening will leave footprints upon our hearts and keep us firm, steadfast, and immovable as daughters of God.

As I have traveled the world, the faithful sisters of Relief Society have left footprints upon my heart. I have watched their devoted efforts to assist and serve one another here and around the world. I will never be the same.

I ask that your prayers be with me as I say a few things that I hope will penetrate your hearts and lead you closer to our Savior and Redeemer.

We choose to be steadfast and immovable in our faith because of the promises of eternal glory, eternal increase, and continued family relationships in the celestial kingdom. We love our families and know that our greatest joy and peace come to us as we watch each family member face the tests of life and make righteous choices to overcome the world.

Occasionally I place my hands on both sides of the face of one of my children or grandchildren when they are doing something that will bring immediate or long-term harm to themselves in the process. I look deeply into their eyes and carefully explain to them how much they are loved and cherished. Then I describe the harm that could result from the actions they have chosen.

I can envision the Savior holding our faces between His hands and pleading with each of us individually to remain steadfast and immovable and faithful to the God who made us.

Sisters, I wish I could place my hands on both sides of your faces, look deeply into your eyes, and impart to you a clear vision of your vital role as beloved daughters of God whose “lives have meaning, purpose, and direction.” We are women who “increase our testimonies of Jesus Christ through prayer and scripture study,” who “seek spiritual strength by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost.” We “dedicate ourselves to strengthening marriages, families, and homes” and “find nobility in motherhood and joy in womanhood.”¹ We are women of the Relief Society organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Before coming into this mortal world, we lived together in the presence of a loving Heavenly Father. I imagine one of our favorite topics of conversation was what would happen when we passed through the veil and entered this earthly existence.

Now we are here. Even though we were instructed regarding the difficulties we would encounter on earth, I doubt we understood or could have known how demanding and trying, how tiring and even sorrowful at times

this mortal existence would be. We have no doubt all, at some point, felt that what we were experiencing was just too hard to bear. Yet the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “When [we] joined this Church [we] enlisted to serve God. When [we] did that [we] left ... neutral ground, and [we] never can get back on to it. Should [we] forsake the Master [we] enlisted to serve it will be by the instigation of the evil one, and [we] will follow his dictation and be his servant.”²

I can imagine our Savior placing His hands on both sides of our faces, looking deeply into our eyes, and promising a sisterhood, a Relief Society, to help us in our trials. This organization for all women of the Church is for the purpose of helping to bring us to the Savior and assisting one another in helping the sick and the poor. Relief Society sisters will put their arms around the new members and make everyone feel needed and nurtured, no matter what their status of life is at this time. They will welcome the new young women as they arrive and make them an integral part of every activity. Use them. We cannot afford to lose them. Everyone will be lifted and loved. Everyone will follow their priesthood leaders as they guide us through a narrow passageway to a safe harbor, pure truth, and a lifestyle befitting daughters of God.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled the women of the Church: “Rise to the great potential within you. I do not ask that you reach beyond your capacity. I hope you will not nag yourselves with thoughts of failure. I hope you will not try to set goals far beyond your capacity to achieve. I hope you will simply do what you can do in the best way you know. If you do so, you will witness miracles come to pass.”³

When I hear sisters say, “It is just too hard to do my visiting teaching” or “I simply do not have time to pray and read my scriptures!” or “I have too much going on to attend home, family, and personal enrichment meeting,” I want to say as President Hinckley has counseled, “Rise to the great potential within you.” We may need to step back and consider if our actions are consistent with those things that matter most to us. As we place first things first in our lives, we can live each day without regret.

We go to Relief Society each week not only to be fed, nurtured, and loved, but also to report for duty. Sometimes the most important duty is right within the walls of our own homes.

Lucifer is doing all that he can to divert us from those things of first importance. One of his most effective tools is to convince us that it is impossible to stay centered on spiritual things when the demands of life are so pressing.

When a lawyer asked the Savior which of all the commandments was greatest, Jesus responded without hesitation: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ... And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁴ These are the great commandments. Upon them hang all the law and the prophets. These are the things that matter most. As we strive to live these commandments, the others will take care of themselves.

How is our relationship with our Heavenly Father? Do we love Him with all our heart, might, mind, and strength? How well do we love our families, our neighbors, our Relief Society sisters, our fellowman? These questions help us recognize the things that matter most and serve as a template upon which we can place the activities of our days to see how we measure up.

Do we show our love to the Lord if we spend our time at R-rated movies, reading pornographic material, or involving ourselves in activities that would be degrading or unbecoming a daughter of God? Do we show our love to the Lord if we dress immodestly? Recently I spoke to a large group of youth, and one young man after the

meeting handed me this note: “Please, will you let the women of the Church know how much I appreciate their modesty? I know in our world it is difficult to find modest clothes. But please let them know that it is worth it to me and to the wholesome men they will marry.”

We cannot abandon our faith when challenges come our way. We will not turn away; we will not retreat; we will not become discouraged. We will move boldly and clearly forward and be an example for all those around us in modesty, humility, and faith. Being steadfast and immovable is a personal quest that has eternal rewards, for if we do so, “Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life.”⁵

Some years ago, in her parting words to the Relief Society sisters, Sister Belle Spafford said, “The average woman today, I believe, would do well to appraise her interests, evaluate the activities in which she is engaged, and then take steps to simplify her life, putting things of first importance first, placing emphasis where the rewards will be greatest and most enduring, and ridding herself of the less rewarding activities.”⁶

Sometimes it takes a traumatic event to help us understand things of first importance. A few weeks ago we experienced one of those dramatic events that changed our lives forever and helped us realize the need to be prepared. The most frequent sentiment expressed by those directly affected by the recent terrorist attacks on the eastern coast of the United States was that all they wanted was to have their family together again. I understand this reaction.

Earlier this year, I underwent a serious surgery and spent many days in the hospital. As I pondered my life and what I would report to the Lord if I were called home, I realized with absolute clarity that the family is one of the most important responsibilities we have. I knew my greatest joy would be to have my children, grandchildren, and future great-grandchildren remain firm, steadfast, and immovable in the gospel. In those lonely moments in a dark hospital room, I realized that what we do within the walls of our homes far outweighs the things we do outside of them.

Yes, at times we are beset by troubles and pain and grief. But we must not surrender. We must not retreat. Eliza R. Snow, the second president of the Relief Society, penned these words:

“I will go forward. ... I will smile at the rage of the tempest, and ride fearlessly and triumphantly across the boisterous ocean of circumstance. ... And the *‘testimony of Jesus’* will light up a lamp that will guide my vision through the portals of immortality, and communicate to my understanding the glories of the Celestial kingdom.”

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Oh, that I could look face-to-face into the eyes of every sister and have her catch the fire of those words and truly understand who she is and what she is capable of accomplishing. Oh, that the words of our declaration could take root deep within us: “We are beloved ... daughters of God. ... We are united in our devotion to Jesus Christ. ... We are women of faith, virtue, vision, and charity.”⁸

Discouragement, sorrow, pain, and grief may beset us and try us. But my beloved sisters in the gospel, while it is too late to turn back, we can stand firm and steadfast and leave footprints on the hearts of those whose lives we touch. We can smile at the rage of the tempest and ride triumphantly across the boisterous ocean of circumstance. We can have the testimony of Jesus Christ light up a lamp that will guide us through the portals of immortality.

That we may finish gloriously, that we may focus our energies on those things of first importance, and that we may yet meet on the other side of the veil and embrace each other with the triumphant knowledge that we have remained steadfast and immovable is my hope and prayer for you, dear sisters, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Relief Society declaration, in Mary Ellen Smoot, “Rejoice, Daughters of Zion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 92–93.

2. In “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 15 Aug. 1892, 492.

3. *Motherhood: A Heritage of Faith* (1995), 9.

4. Matt. 22:37, 39.

5. Mosiah 5:15.

6. *A Woman’s Reach* (1974), 23.

7. “The Lord Is My Trust,” *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political*, vol. 1 (1856), 148–49; emphasis in original.

8. *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 92.