



Embrace the Future with Faith

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The future will be glorious for those who are prepared and who continue to prepare to be instruments in the Lord's hands.

This has been an unforgettable evening. My dear sisters, I am honored to be with you. You have been on my mind so often during these past few months. You are more than eight million strong. You have not only the *numbers* but the *spiritual power* to change the world. I have watched you doing just that during this pandemic.

Some of you suddenly found yourselves searching for scarce supplies or a new job. Many tutored children and checked on neighbors. Some welcomed missionaries home earlier than expected, while others transformed your homes into missionary training centers. You have used technology to connect with family and friends, to minister to those who have felt isolated, and to study *Come, Follow Me* with others. You have found new ways to make the Sabbath a delight. And you have made protective masks—millions of them!

With heartfelt compassion and love, my heart goes out to the many women around the world whose loved ones have died. We weep with you. And we pray for you. We praise and pray for all who work tirelessly to safeguard the health of others.

You young women have also been remarkable. Though social media has been flooded with contention, many of you have found ways to encourage others and share our Savior's light.

Sisters, you have all been absolutely heroic! I marvel at your strength and your faith. You have shown that in difficult circumstances, you bravely carry on. I love you, and I assure you that the Lord loves you and sees the great work you are performing. Thank you! Once again, you have proven that you are literally the hope of Israel!

You embody the hopes that President Gordon B. Hinckley had for you when he introduced "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" 25 years ago in the September 1995 general Relief Society meeting.¹ It is significant that he chose to introduce this important proclamation to the sisters of the Church. By doing so, President Hinckley underscored the irreplaceable influence of women in the Lord's plan.

Now, I would love to know what you have learned this year. Have you grown closer to the Lord, or do you feel further away from Him? And how have current events made you feel about the future?

Admittedly, the Lord has spoken of our day in sobering terms. He warned that in our day "men's hearts [would fail] them"² and that even the very elect would be at risk of being deceived.³ He told the Prophet Joseph Smith that "peace [would] be taken from the earth"⁴ and calamities would befall mankind.⁵

Yet the Lord has also provided a vision of how remarkable this dispensation is. He inspired the Prophet Joseph Smith to declare that "the work of ... these last days, is one of vast magnitude. ... Its glories are past description, and its grandeur unsurpassable."⁶

Now, *grandeur* may not be the word you would choose to describe these past few months! How *are* we to deal with both the somber prophecies and the glorious pronouncements about our day? The Lord told us how with simple, but stunning, reassurance: "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear."⁷

What a promise! It is one that can literally change the way we see our future. I recently heard a woman of deep testimony admit that the pandemic, combined with an earthquake in the Salt Lake Valley, had helped her realize she was not as prepared as she thought she was. When I asked whether she was referring to her food storage *or* her testimony, she smiled and said, "Yes!"

If preparation is our key to embracing this dispensation and our future with faith, how can we best prepare?

For decades, the Lord's prophets have urged us to store food, water, and financial reserves for a time of need. The current pandemic has reinforced the wisdom of that

counsel. I urge you to take steps to be temporally prepared. But I am even more concerned about your spiritual and emotional preparation.

In that regard, we can learn a lot from Captain Moroni. As commander of the Nephite armies, he faced opposing forces that were stronger, greater in number, and meaner. So, Moroni prepared his people in three essential ways.

First, he helped them create areas where they would be safe—“places of security” he called them.⁸ **Second**, he prepared “the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord.”⁹ And **third**, he never stopped preparing his people—physically or spiritually.¹⁰ Let us consider these three principles.

Principle Number One: Create Places of Security

Moroni fortified every Nephite city with embankments, forts, and walls.¹¹ When the Lamanites came against them, they “were astonished exceedingly, because of the wisdom of the Nephites in preparing *their places of security*.”¹²

Similarly, as turmoil rages around *us*, we need to create places where *we* are safe, both physically and spiritually. When your home becomes a personal sanctuary of faith—where the Spirit resides—your home becomes the first line of defense.

Likewise, the stakes of Zion are “a refuge from the storm”¹³ because they are led by those who hold priesthood keys and exercise priesthood authority. As you continue to follow the counsel of those whom the Lord has authorized to guide you, you will feel greater safety.

The temple—the house of the Lord—is a place of security unlike any other. There, you sisters are endowed with priesthood power through the sacred priesthood covenants you make.¹⁴ There, your families are sealed for eternity. Even this year, when access to our temples has been seriously limited, your endowment has given you constant access to God’s power as you have honored your covenants with Him.

Simply said, a place of security is *anywhere* you can feel the presence of the Holy Ghost and be guided by Him.¹⁵ When the Holy Ghost is with you, you can teach truth, even when it runs counter to prevailing opinions. And you can ponder sincere questions about the gospel in an environment of revelation.

I invite you, my dear sisters, to create a home that is a place of security. And I renew my invitation for you to increase your understanding of priesthood power and of temple covenants and blessings. Having places of security to which you can retreat will help you embrace the future with faith.

Principle Number Two: Prepare Your Mind to Be Faithful to God

We have undertaken a major project to extend the life and capacity of the Salt Lake Temple.

Some questioned the need for taking such extraordinary measures. However, when the Salt Lake Valley suffered a 5.7-magnitude earthquake earlier this year, this venerable temple shook hard enough that the trumpet on the statue of the angel Moroni fell!¹⁶

Just as the physical foundation of the Salt Lake Temple must be strong enough to withstand natural disasters, our *spiritual* foundations must be solid. Then, when metaphorical earthquakes rock our lives, we can stand “steadfast and immovable” because of our faith.¹⁷

The Lord taught us how to increase our faith by seeking “*learning*, even by study and also by faith.”¹⁸ We strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ as we strive to keep His commandments and “always remember him.”¹⁹ Further, our faith increases every time we *exercise* our faith in Him. That is what learning by faith means.

For example, each time we have the faith to be obedient to God’s laws—even when popular opinions belittle us—or each time we resist entertainment or ideologies that celebrate covenant-breaking, we are *exercising* our faith, which in turn *increases* our faith.

Further, few things build faith more than does regular immersion in the Book of Mormon. No other book testifies of Jesus Christ with such power and clarity. Its prophets, as inspired by the Lord, saw our day and selected the doctrine and truths that would help *us* most. The Book of Mormon *is* our *latter-day* survival guide.

Of course, our ultimate security comes as we yoke ourselves to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ! Life *without* God is a life filled with fear. Life *with* God is a life filled with peace. This is because spiritual blessings come to the faithful. Receiving personal revelation is one of the greatest of those blessings.

The Lord has promised that if we will ask, we may receive “revelation upon revelation.”²⁰ I promise that as you increase your capacity to receive revelation, the Lord will bless you with increased direction for your life and with boundless gifts of the Spirit.

Principle Number Three: Never Stop Preparing

Even when things went *well*, Captain Moroni continued to prepare his people. He never stopped. He *never* became complacent.

The adversary never stops attacking. So, we can *never* stop preparing! The more self-reliant we are—temporally, emotionally, and spiritually—the more prepared we are to thwart Satan’s relentless assaults.

Dear sisters, you are adept at creating places of security for yourselves and those you love. Further, you have a divine endowment that enables you to build faith in

others in compelling ways.²¹ And *you* never stop. You have demonstrated that once again this year.

Please, keep going! Your vigilance in safeguarding your homes and instilling faith in the hearts of your loved ones will reap rewards for generations to come.

My dear sisters, we have *so much* to look forward to! The Lord placed you here now because He knew you had the capacity to negotiate the complexities of the latter part of these latter days. He knew you would grasp the grandeur of His work and be eager to help bring it to pass.

I am not saying that the days ahead will be easy, but I promise you that the future will be glorious for those who are prepared and who continue to prepare to be instruments in the Lord's hands.

My dear sisters, let us not just *endure* this current season. Let us *embrace the future with faith!* Turbulent times are opportunities for us to thrive spiritually. They are times when our influence can be much more penetrating than in calmer times.

I promise that as we create places of security, prepare our minds to be faithful to God, and never stop preparing, God will bless us. He will “deliver us; yea, insomuch that he [will] speak peace to our souls, and [will] grant unto us great faith, and ... cause us that we [can] hope for our deliverance in him.”²²

As you prepare to embrace the future with faith, these promises *will* be yours! I so testify, with my expression of love *for* you and my confidence *in* you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.