

Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts Unceasingly

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There is no limit to your potential. If you will take control of your lives, the future is filled with opportunity and gladness.

My dear young women, what a wonderful sight you are in this great hall. You are accompanied by your mothers, grandmothers, and teachers. Beyond this Conference Center hundreds and thousands of others are assembled across the world. They will hear us in more than a score of languages. Our speeches will be translated into their native tongues. The opportunity to speak to you is an overwhelming responsibility. But it is also a wonderful opportunity. I pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit in that which I say.

Others have eloquently addressed the theme of this meeting. I only mention it. It is the revealed word of the Lord found in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It reads as follows:

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (vv. 45–46).

Could there be a greater promise to anyone than these remarkable words of revelation from the Lord? These are the words of God, given in revelation to the Prophet Joseph. They carry with them a magnificent promise to all who will let virtue garnish their thoughts unceasingly.

Now you young women are on the threshold of life. You are old enough to have been baptized. You are young enough that the future world of which you dream still lies ahead of you. Each is a child of God. Each of you is a creature of Divinity. You are literally a daughter of the Almighty. There is no limit to your potential. If you will take control of your lives, the future is filled with opportunity and gladness. You

cannot afford to waste your talents or your time. Great opportunities lie ahead of you.

Now I offer you a very simple recipe which, if observed, will assure your happiness. It is a simple four-point program. It is as follows: (1) pray, (2) study, (3) pay your tithing, and (4) attend your meetings.

With reference to the first item—personal prayer—you are a daughter of our Heavenly Father. He is your heavenly parent. Speak with Him. Each night and morning get on your knees and express unto Him the gratitude of your heart. Speak of the blessings which you desire and need. Never forget that this Church began with the humble prayer of the boy Joseph Smith in the grove of his father's farm. From that remarkable experience, which we call the First Vision, has grown this work until today it is established in 160 nations, with a membership of over 12 million. It is the very personification of Daniel's vision of a stone cut out of the mountain without hands rolling forth to fill the whole earth (see Daniel 2:44–45).

Not only can you offer your individual prayers, but you can encourage your parents to have family prayer, if they are not already doing so. Prayer is the bridge over which we approach our Father in Heaven. It costs nothing. It requires only faith and effort. There is nothing more rewarding than kneeling in humble prayer. It speaks of love for Deity, as the giver of all that is good. It speaks of respect for self. There is no substitute for it. It is personal communication with God.

The second item on my list is study. What is included in this simple five-letter word? First is a study of the scriptures. You might only read portions of the Old Testament, but it contains great lessons. The New Testament is a gold mine. It contains the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—as well as the Acts of the Apostles and other writings. Try reading just one of the Gospels—perhaps the book of John. When you are through with that, pick up the Book of Mormon.

Two years ago I challenged the entire Church to read the Book of Mormon before the end of the year. It is amazing how many met that challenge. Everyone who did so was blessed for his or her effort. As they became immersed in this added witness of our Redeemer, their hearts were quickened and their spirits touched. Some of you were too young to have read it then, but you are not too young to start to read it now.

Beyond ecclesiastical study there is the challenge of education. Resolve now, while you are young, that you will get all of the education you can. We live in a highly competitive age, and it will only grow worse. Education is the key that will unlock the door of opportunity.

You may plan on marriage, and hope for it, but you are not certain that it will come. And even though you marry, education will be of great

benefit to you. Don't just drift along, letting the days come and go without improvement in your lives. The Lord will bless you as you make the effort. Your lives will be enriched and your outlook broadened as your minds are opened to new vistas and knowledge.

The next item is the payment of tithing. Glorious is the promise of the Lord concerning those who pay their tithes. He says in modern revelation that they "shall not be burned" (see D&C 64:23).

His great promise is found in the words of Malachi. Said He: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. ...

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:8, 10).

And then He goes on to say something very interesting. Listen to this:

"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

"And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land" (Malachi 3:11–12).

While tithing is paid with money, more importantly it is paid with faith. I have never met an individual who paid an honest tithe who complained about it. Rather, he put his trust in the Lord, and the Lord never failed him.

When I was a small boy, each December my father would take us all across the street to the home of Bishop Duncan for tithing settlement. The bishop did not have an office in the ward building, and so he had to conduct business in his home. We would all sit in his living room and, one by one, he would invite us into the dining room. Our tithing might be 25 cents, or maybe 50 cents, but it was a full tithing. He wrote out a receipt and recorded the amount in the ward record. The amount may have been so small that it cost more to record it than it was worth. But it established a habit which continued through all of these years. With the payment of tithing have come innumerable blessings as the Lord has promised.

I was married during the Depression, when money was scarce, but we paid our tithing, and somehow we never went hungry or lacked anything we needed.

The fourth item—attend your meetings, your sacrament meetings. There is no substitute for partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It

is a solemn, sacred, and wonderful undertaking to be able to partake of the bread and water in remembrance of the body and blood of the Savior of mankind.

There is no other event in human history as significant as the atoning sacrifice of our divine Redeemer. None else compares with it. Without it life would be meaningless. It would be a dead-end journey.

With it we are assured of eternal life. Death is not the end, but rather a passing on to a more glorious existence.

All of this is symbolized in the partaking of the sacrament. All other items in our meetings are of lesser importance compared with partaking the emblems of the sacrifice of our Lord.

If you will do these four things, I promise you that your lives will be fruitful, that your happiness will be great, and that your accomplishments will be tremendous and satisfying in every respect.

May the Lord bless you, my dear young sisters; may His blessings attend you at all times and in all conditions. We love you. We pray for you. May heaven smile upon you, I humbly ask in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.