

Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World

Gordon B. Hinckley CR October 1995

I am greatly honored in the invitation to participate with you. My beloved companion, Marjorie, would do better in addressing the Relief Society than I. I honor her as the Relief Society member of our family and because of her and her activities, my appreciation for this great organization is enhanced. This has been a wonderful meeting. I commend to each of you all that we have heard from these very able leaders, in whom we have total confidence.

What a mighty congregation of women you are. There are three and one-half million of you. You live in many lands and you speak with a variety of tongues. But you understand with a single heart. Each of you is a daughter of God. Reflect on all the wondrous meaning of that one paramount fact.

He who is our Eternal Father has blessed you with miraculous powers of mind and body. He never intended that you should be less than the crowning glory of His creations.

I remind you of words spoken by the Prophet Joseph to the women of the Relief Society in April of 1842. Said he: "If you live up to your privilege, the angels cannot be restrain'd from being your associates" (Relief Society Minutebook, 28 Apr. 1842, LDS Church Archives). What marvelous potential lies within you.

This evening I look into the eyes of beautiful younger women, who dream of lives of accomplishment and happiness. I look into the eyes of mothers, who carry in their hearts anxieties concerning their homes and their children. I look into the eyes of single parents whose burdens are so very heavy, and who, in their loneliness, plead and pray for strength and companionship. I look into the eyes of grandmothers and great-grandmothers whose years are many, who have weathered the storms that have beat upon them and who have drunk deeply from the waters of life, some of them brackish, some of them sweet. I am grateful for the presence of each one of you. I am grateful for the strength that you have and for your loyalty, your faith, your love. I am thankful for the resolution which you carry in your hearts to walk in faith, to keep the commandments, to do what is right at all times and in all circumstances.

I believe this is the best season for women in all the history of the world. In opportunities for education, for the training of your hands and minds, there has never before been a time when doors were so widely opened to you as they are today.

But neither has there been a time, at least in recent history, when you have been confronted with more challenging problems. I need not remind you that the world we are in is a world of turmoil, of shifting values. Shrill voices call out for one thing or another in betrayal of time-tested standards of behavior. The moral moorings of our society have been badly shaken. So many of the youth of the world, and likewise so many of their elders, listen only to the seductive voice of self-gratification. You single young women face tremendous challenges, and we know it is not easy for you. I cannot say enough of appreciation for your determination to live by the standards

of the Church, to walk with the strength of virtue, to keep your minds above the slough of filth which seems to be moving like a flood across the world. Thank you for knowing there is a better way. Thank you for the will to say no. Thank you for the strength to deny temptation and look beyond and above to the shining light of your eternal potential.

How bitter are the fruits of casting aside standards of virtue. The statistics are appalling. More than one-fourth of all children born in the United States are born out of wedlock, and the situation grows more serious. Of the teens who give birth, 46 percent will go on welfare within four years; of unmarried teens who give birth, 73 percent will be on welfare within four years (see *Starting Points—Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*, New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1994, pp. 4, 21). I believe that it should be the blessing of every child to be born into a home where that child is welcomed, nurtured, loved, and blessed with parents, a father and a mother, who live with loyalty to one another and to their children. I am sure that none of you younger women want less than this. Stand strong against the wiles of the world. The creators of our entertainment, the purveyors of much of our literature, would have you believe otherwise. The accumulated wisdom of centuries declares with clarity and certainty that the greater happiness, the greater security, the greater peace of mind, the deeper reservoirs of love are experienced only by those who walk according to time-tested standards of virtue before marriage and total fidelity within marriage. We pray that as you walk the paths of life you will walk in ways that are straight with the strength to conform even though those paths be narrow.

There are those who would have us believe in the validity of what they choose to call same-sex marriage. Our hearts reach out to those who struggle with feelings of affinity for the same gender. We remember you before the Lord, we sympathize with you, we regard you as our brothers and our sisters. However, we cannot condone immoral practices on your part any more than we can condone immoral practices on the part of others.

To you wives and mothers who work to maintain stable homes where there is an environment of love and respect and appreciation I say, the Lord bless you. Regardless of your circumstances, walk with faith. Rear your children in light and truth. Teach them to pray while they are young. Read to them from the scriptures even though they may not understand all that you read. Teach them to pay their tithes and offerings on the first money they ever receive. Let this practice become a habit in their lives. Teach your sons to honor womanhood. Teach your daughters to walk in virtue. Accept responsibility in the Church, and trust in the Lord to make you equal to any call you may receive. Your example will set a pattern for your children. Reach out in love to those in distress and need.

Encourage your children to read more and watch television less. “A study by the American Psychological Association figures that the typical child, watching 27 hours of TV a week, will view 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence from age 3 to age 12” (*U.S. News & World Report*, 11 Sept. 1995, p. 66).

Seek to establish an environment conducive to study in the home. An editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* reports on the scholastic superiority of ethnic Asians at the University of California at Berkeley. Speaking of the extraordinary accomplishments of these people, it says: “The most important factor in the rise of this new American elite is the intense and devoted family

relationships that typify the Asian home. . . . They include respect for elders and high standards for children, including hard work at school and off-hours responsibilities that many times still include chores at a relative's business" ("The Asians at Berkeley," 30 May 1995, p. A14).

It is the home which produces the nursery stock of new generations. I hope that you mothers will realize that when all is said and done, you have no more compelling responsibility, nor any laden with greater rewards, than the nurture you give your children in an environment of security, peace, companionship, love, and motivation to grow and do well.

Now to you single mothers, whatever the cause of your present situation, our hearts reach out to you. We know that many of you live in loneliness, insecurity, worry, and fear. For most of you there is never enough money. Your constant, brooding worry is anxiety for your children and their futures. Many of you find yourselves in circumstances where you have to work and leave your children largely to their own devices. But if when they are very small there is much of affection, there is shown much of love, there is prayer together, then there will more likely be peace in the hearts and strength in the character of your children. Teach them the ways of the Lord. Declared Isaiah, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" ([Isa. 54:13](#)).

The more surely you rear your children in the ways of the gospel of Jesus Christ, with love and high expectation, the more likely that there will be peace in their lives.

Set an example for them. That will mean more than all the teaching you can give them. Do not overindulge them. Let them grow up with respect for and understanding of the meaning of labor, of working and contributing to the home and its surroundings, with some way of earning some of their own expense money. Let your sons save for missions, and encourage them to prepare themselves, not only financially, but spiritually and in an attitude to go out to serve the Lord without selfishness of any kind. I do not hesitate to promise that if you will do so, you will have reason to count your blessings.

I received a letter only this past Monday from which I read to you. This woman writes:

"Twenty years ago last June, I was expecting a new baby and had five other little children, nine years and under. My husband chose to leave our family and walk another path. I wish I could say I was a noble pioneer, but rather I was a naive, frightened, insecure young mother who did not know what to do and who daily made foolish mistakes. Nevertheless, I sought counsel from my leaders and obeyed, even when I knew their advice would make my life more complicated. I decided it was not for me to question and that if some advice caused temporary pain for me, it must be something I should experience.

"I remember reading President Kimball's monthly message in the *Ensign* wherein he promised that if we would read the scriptures daily that every problem we faced during the day would be answered within those holy pages. I thought, 'Okay, President Kimball, you're on. I have lots of problems and they sure do need answers.' I gathered my children around me and we studied daily, we prayed, we fasted for our Daddy and ourselves, we held family home evening and attended our meetings. We forgave our Daddy and I literally gave my agency back to my

Heavenly Father. I told Him if I was not to have my husband for eternity as I had originally thought, I would be pleased if He would change the love I had for him as a wife into a Christ-like love, because I would rather die than go another minute hating or resenting the father of my children. I did not want to teach anger, hate or bitterness to them. I knew my husband was basically a good man, full of potential and talent. He had made a terrible mistake and I knew he would reap his own heartaches and he has. But my personal task at hand was to care for those soon-to-be six children and to teach them in such a way that they could not misunderstand the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I felt I had borne the heartbreak of losing my husband, but I could not bear it if I lost one precious child of God, who had been entrusted to my care.

“I am humbly touched to report the Lord both heard and answered my prayers. The youngest of my four sons (from my first marriage) is presently serving a mission. . . . He joins his other three brothers and a sister who have seen fit to share their testimonies literally all over the world. . . . My oldest daughter married a returned missionary in the temple. . . . The three oldest boys have been Elders Quorum Presidents and Ward Mission Leaders, the two daughters have served in a Primary Presidency and Relief Society Presidency. Four of those beautiful children have found wonderful eternal companions and have been married in the temple. They are on the right track and have tasted the joy of service to a small degree.

“President Hinckley,” she continues, “this is a miracle if ever there was a miracle. The Lord protected and nurtured those children. He answered their prayers. . . .

“The Lord saw fit to provide me with a second husband and we were sealed in the temple. We have been a family. Was the way easy? No, there were a million troubles to iron out. But with the scriptures as our ‘iron rod’ resource, prayer as our foundation, and obedience as our determined pathway, my children are learning ‘to trust in the Lord with all [their] hearts and lean not unto [their] own understanding.’

“I do not share our story with you,” she writes, “to brag of myself, but I certainly can boast in the Lord. The Atonement is very real for us. Wounded hearts have been healed, confidence has been restored, peace has been tasted in a most delicious way. Indeed, as you have said, ‘Every principle God has revealed carries its own conviction of its truth.’ I think of my first husband, if he could only realize he has already paid the price for his mistake. . . . He missed the joy of seeing his talented children grow up in the Lord. He missed their school and church achievements, and their mission farewells and reports—all that makes life sweet. How thankful I am that I was privileged to be by their sides.”

She concludes: “I know there are many single parents in the world today. How I wish I could help them see that they must never waste time reliving their own tender injuries. I have found if you cast your burden at the Savior’s feet, He will carry it for you and replace anguish with love. . . . May the Lord bless you and your family always. With deepest love and appreciation,” and she signs the letter.

Now to you grandmothers and great-grandmothers may I say just a word. Tremendous has been your experience. Tremendous is your understanding. You can be as an anchor in a world of shifting values. You have lived long, buffed and polished by the adversities of life through which

you have passed. Quiet are your ways, deliberate your counsel. You dearly beloved women are such treasures in this topsy-turvy society. God bless you. May your waning years be filled with sunshine, with the love of those whom you love, and with love for the Lord.

I have touched lightly on some of the serious problems which confront many of you sisters.

With so much of sophistry that is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurements and enticements to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn. In furtherance of this we of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles now issue a proclamation to the Church and to the world as a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family which the prophets, seers, and revelators of this church have repeatedly stated throughout its history. I now take the opportunity of reading to you this proclamation:

“We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

“All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

“In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

“The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

“We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan.

“Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. ‘Children are an heritage of the Lord’ (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

“The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

“We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

“We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.”

We commend to all a careful, thoughtful, and prayerful reading of this proclamation. The strength of any nation is rooted within the walls of its homes. We urge our people everywhere to strengthen their families in conformity with these time-honored values.

May the Lord bless you, my beloved sisters. You are the guardians of the hearth. You are the bearers of the children. You are they who nurture them and establish within them the habits of their lives. No other work reaches so close to divinity as does the nurturing of the sons and daughters of God. May you be strengthened for the challenges of the day. May you be endowed with wisdom beyond your own in dealing with the problems you constantly face. May your prayers and your pleadings be answered with blessings upon your heads and upon the heads of your loved ones. We leave with you our love and our blessing, that your lives may be filled with peace and gladness. It can be so. Many of you can testify that it has been so. The Lord bless you now and through the years to come, I humbly pray in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.