

Changing the World One Virtuous Woman at a Time

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

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In April 2008, the newly called Young Women general presidency—Elaine S. Dalton, Mary N. Cook, and Ann M. Dibb—stood atop Ensign Peak on the northern edge of Salt Lake City and looked out over the valley.

From their vantage point the figure of the angel Moroni sparkled on the Salt Lake Temple, and they knew then what the Lord had in mind for the young women of the Church.

The three women held aloft a walking stick from which waved a gold Peruvian shawl—their banner and ensign to the nations, a call for a return to virtue.

“We cannot get caught up with this new value of virtue without saying the reason for the value is the temple,” Sister Dalton said. “And the temple is

the reason for everything we are doing in Young Women, because it will help these young women to come unto Christ.”

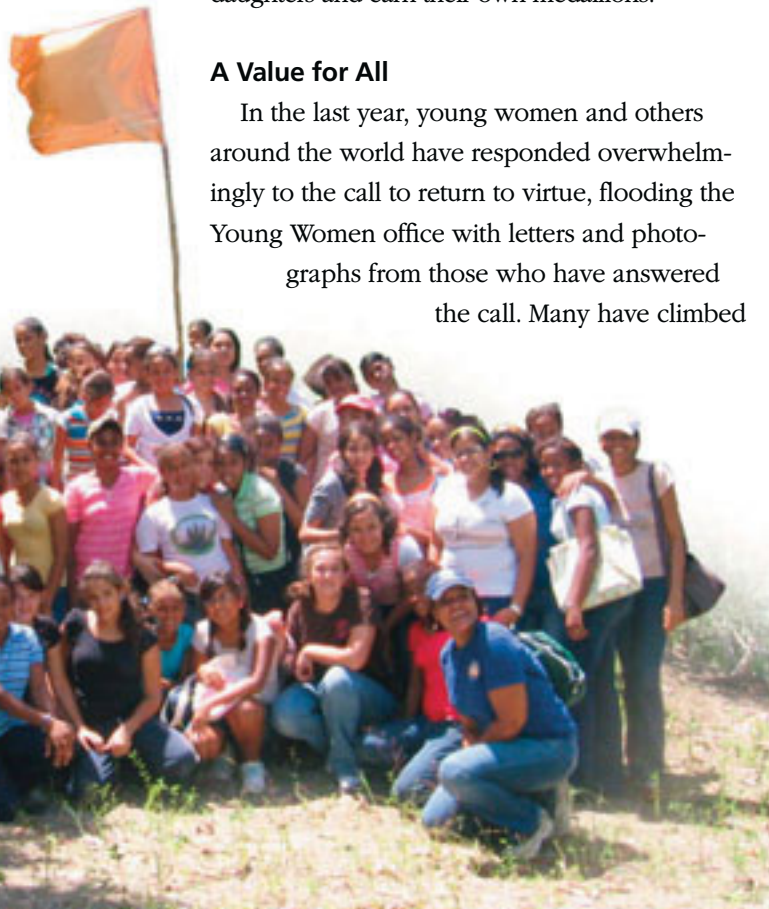
Virtue was officially added to the Young Women values in November 2008. It is defined in the Personal Progress book as “a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards. It includes chastity and purity” (*Young Women Personal Progress* [booklet, 2009], 70).

This value is unique in that all the experiences and the value project are required, where the other values allow young women to choose from several options. In addition, mothers have been invited to complete the Personal Progress program with their daughters and earn their own medallions.

A Value for All

In the last year, young women and others around the world have responded overwhelmingly to the call to return to virtue, flooding the Young Women office with letters and photographs from those who have answered the call. Many have climbed

Young women and their leaders in the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Independencia Stake ascended Cambita Garabito, a mountain in the Dominican Republic, where they raised their own banner to virtue in August 2009.



mountains and unfurled their own banners.

The project for the value of virtue is to follow the Savior's admonition to learn of Him (see D&C 19:23) by reading the entire Book of Mormon and recording thoughts regularly in a journal.

The Book of Mormon teaches about societies that prospered and were happy when they were virtuous and pure but that fell when they were no longer virtuous, Sister Dibb said.

Men and women have been equally enthusiastic about the new value, the Young Women presidency said, citing examples of entire groups of young men and singles wards that have worked on the value together.

Sister Dibb emphasized that both men and women must focus on virtue to obtain the greatest blessings. "Men have no power or strength to exercise the priesthood that they receive if they are not morally pure," she said. "And women receive that power and strength to fulfill their divine callings as wives, mothers, and as women as they practice virtue."

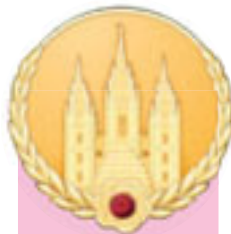
Return to Virtue

Sister Dalton said she believes that now is the time to emphasize the value of virtue, a time when the world does everything but promote virtue.

"It's interesting to us that in this world so many young women can lose sight of their identity as daughters of God," Sister Cook said. "We're just reminding them of that, and also of the fact that if you have made a mistake, you can repent."

The commitment to remain virtuous and pure is possible because of the enabling and redeeming power of the Savior's Atonement, Sister Dibb said. The fourth value experience focuses on repentance.

In the last year, many women—both old and young—have communicated a desire to return to



The Young Womanhood Recognition medallion has a new design.

being virtuous women. "[The addition of virtue] has created an excitement for women who have made wrong choices. Many have said, 'I can be a virtuous woman again. . . . It is possible for me,'" Sister Cook said.

Many of those who desire to be virtuous again wonder where they can start. The Young Women presidency shares with them this formula: Pray night and morning. Read in the Book of Mormon five minutes or more each day. And smile.

"If all women in the Church and the world did this, think what the world would be like in five years," Sister Dalton said. "We really do believe that virtuous young women led by the Spirit can change the world." ■

PERSONAL PROGRESS UPDATED

The Young Women general presidency has updated Personal Progress materials to reflect recent changes.

The new Personal Progress booklet has a pink cover and includes the activities for the new eighth value—virtue—that was added at the end of 2008. Most of the value activities remain the same, but some have changed slightly to be more current and more focused on temple covenants.

The Young Womanhood Recognition medallion now depicts, in addition to the temple spires, a beehive that suggests harmony, cooperation, and work; the Mia Maid rose for love, faith, and purity; and the laurel wreath, which stands for honor and accomplishment. A small ruby in the center of the rose symbolizes the new value of virtue (see Proverbs 31:10) and the completion of Personal Progress.

Additional materials include a new theme poster and scripture ribbons. The ribbons will be given at the completion of value experiences and projects.

The materials are currently available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Content in 51 additional languages will become available throughout early 2010. ■