

# A COVENANT IS FOREVER

*When it comes to decisions I have made as part of a covenant with a loving Heavenly Father, it doesn't matter what the world says.*

By Marta Valencia Vásquez

When I was a teenager, our Young Women president gave each young woman a gift: a picture of the temple. She talked to us about covenants and living clean lives. Then she encouraged us to set a goal to go to the temple one day.

I took this sister's counsel to heart and decided to make preparation a priority. There was no temple in Costa

Rica at that time, but I did know from my recent baptism what a covenant was, and I looked forward to the opportunity to make additional covenants with the Lord.

No one else in my family was a member of the Church then, so the gospel was not taught in our home. Still, I decided that I could learn about gospel standards on my own and

follow them. My preparation included attending seminary, even though it was held very early in the morning. It included not dating until I reached age 16. And it meant living the law of chastity—certainly not something popular or even common among most of my peers, but something I knew I could do because I had covenanted with the Lord that I would.

Studying the scriptures, both in seminary and on my own, strengthened my resolve to live a chaste, clean life. I remember being particularly inspired by the 2,000 stripling warriors. As it says in Alma 53:20–21, these young men “were exceedingly valiant



## FOR THE STRENGTH OF YOUNG ADULTS

“I have only one question: Are you going to follow the true and living prophets or not? It really isn't any more complicated than that. The standard of the Church with regard to morality is clearly outlined in the 'For the Strength of Youth' pamphlet, which you haven't outgrown, even

though many of you are no longer in Young Men and Young Women. If you choose to read anything that contains material that is contrary to the moral standards of the Church, then you are placing yourself and your own wisdom above the counsel of God's prophets—a course of action that would indeed be very unwise. As soon as people begin to think that they know better than God or his oracles, or that counsel given doesn't apply to themselves, they are stepping

onto a slippery slope that has claimed far too many victims already. It takes faith—real faith, unequivocal and unreserved—to accept and attempt to live by prophetic counsel even when you don't completely understand it. Such simple faith has the power to guide you safely through every challenge you may face in your life.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “When Shall These Things Be?” in *Brigham Young University 1995–96 Speeches* (1996), 189.



for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted. . . . They were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him.” I too wanted to be faithful in the things I’d been entrusted with, including my baptismal covenants.

Additional understanding of covenants came when I was called to serve in the El Salvador San Salvador East Mission. When I received my endowment in the temple, Doctrine and Covenants 82:10 came to my mind: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.” Throughout my mission, that idea of covenants—of us doing our part and

***The covenants I made at baptism and the covenants I made in the temple are as valid today as the day I made them.***

the Lord doing His—motivated me to do my best. As I did so, my companions and I were blessed in our work.

My mission was many years ago, but I continue to find strength from keeping my covenants. I have since been blessed to serve for seven years in the San José Costa Rica Temple. Serving as a temple worker gave me regular opportunities to remember the covenants I had made. I have found similar reminders in serving in the Young Women organization,

where I have tried to teach the importance of covenants just as my leaders taught me.

Keeping our covenants is not always easy. For instance, many people see the law of chastity (or, in some cases, religious behavior in general) as outdated. Fortunately, I don’t feel added pressure from those who don’t share my beliefs or from the passage of time. I look back on what I felt as a young woman when our leader encouraged us to prepare and live for temple covenants. The decision I made then is one I’ve followed to this day.

I can stand firm in my decisions because they weren’t decisions I made just by myself, for myself. Rather, they are decisions I have made as part of a covenant with a loving Heavenly Father. It doesn’t matter what the world says. I promised the Lord that I would obey His commandments. It is a matter of honor. The covenants I made at baptism and the covenants I made in the temple are as valid today as the day I made them. A covenant with God is forever.

Living the way God has asked us to live isn’t always easy, but I testify that it is possible. We can gain confidence and power from living our covenants, and we can be sure that Heavenly Father will never leave us alone. With Him on our side, we can do all things (see Moroni 7:33). ■