



By Elaine S. Dalton
Recently Released Young Women General President

We Are Daughters of Our Heavenly Father

As daughters of God we are each unique and different in our circumstances and experiences. And yet our part matters—because we matter.

Every week young women all over the world repeat the Young Women theme. No matter the language, each time I hear these words, “We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love Him,”¹ the Spirit affirms to my soul that they are true. It is not only an affirmation of our identity—who we are—but also an acknowledgment of whose we are. We are daughters of an exalted being!

In every country and on every continent, I have met confident, articulate young women, filled with light, refined by hard work and trial, possessing pure and simple faith. They are virtuous. They are covenant keepers who “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”² They know who they are and that they have a significant role to play in building the kingdom of God.

When I was in college, I was a member of the BYU International Folk Dancers. One summer our group had the unique privilege to tour the missions in Europe. It was a difficult summer for me because a few months earlier my father had unexpectedly

passed away. While we were in Scotland, I felt especially alone and became discouraged. We danced at a chapel that night, and then after our performance we went next door to the mission home. As I proceeded up the walk, I saw a stone placed in a well-kept garden by the gate. On it I read the words, “What-e’er thou art, act well thy part.” At that moment those

words went deeply into my heart, and I felt the powers of heaven reach out and give me a message. I knew I was known by a loving Heavenly Father. I felt I was not alone. I stood in that garden with tears in my eyes. “What-e’er thou art, act well thy part.” That simple statement renewed my vision that Heavenly Father knew me and had a plan for my life, and the spirit I felt helped me understand that my part mattered.

Later I learned that this saying had once motivated the prophet David O. McKay while he was serving as a young missionary in Scotland. He had seen it on a stone on a building at a discouraging time in his life and on his mission, and the words lifted him. Years later as the building was being torn down, he made arrangements to obtain the stone and had it placed in the garden at the mission home.³

As daughters of God we are each unique and different in our circumstances and experiences. And yet our part matters—because *we* matter. Our daily contributions of nurturing,



Sydney, Australia



teaching, and caring for others may seem mundane, diminished, difficult, and demeaning at times, and yet as we remember that first line in the Young Women theme—“We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us”—it will make all the difference in our relationships and our responses.

Recently my magnificent 92-year-old mother passed away. She left this mortal existence as she had lived—quietly. Her life was not what she had planned. Her husband, my father, passed away when he was 45, leaving her with three children—me and my two brothers. She lived 47 years as a widow. She supported our family by teaching school during the day and teaching piano lessons at night. She cared for her aging father, my grandfather, who lived next door. She made sure that each of us received a college education. In fact, she insisted on it so that we could be “contributors.” And she never complained. She kept her covenants, and because she did, she called down the powers of heaven to bless our home and to send miracles. She relied on the power of prayer, priesthood, and covenant promises. She was faithful in her service to the Lord. Her steadfast devotion steadied us, her children. She

often repeated the scripture: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”⁴ That was her motto, and she knew it was true. She understood what it meant to be a covenant keeper. She was never recognized by the world. She didn’t want that. She understood who she was and whose she was—a daughter of God. Indeed, it can be said of our mother that she acted well her part.

Of women and mothers, President Gordon B. Hinckley once said:

“We must never lose sight of the strength of the women. . . . It is mothers who most directly affect the lives of their children. . . . It is mothers who nurture them and bring them up in the ways of the Lord. Their influence is paramount. . . .

“ . . . They are the creators of life. They are the nurturers of children. They are the teachers of young women. They are our indispensable companions. They are our co-workers in building the kingdom of God. How great is their role, how marvelous their contribution.”⁵

So how do a mother and a father instill in their daughter the ennobling and eternal truth that she is a daughter of God? How do we help her step out

of the world and step into the kingdom of God?

In a morally desensitizing world, young women need women and men to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.” Never before has this been more important than now. Young women need mothers and mentors who exemplify virtuous womanhood. Mothers, your relationship with your daughter is of paramount importance, and so is your example. How you love and honor her father, his priesthood, and his divine role will be reflected and perhaps amplified in your daughter’s attitudes and behavior.

What is that part we must all “act well”? The family proclamation is clear:

“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. . . .

“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.”⁶

In the decadent society of Mormon’s time, he lamented that the women were robbed of that which was most dear and precious above all—their virtue and chastity.⁷

Again I renew the call for a return to virtue. Virtue is the strength and power of daughters of God. What would the world be like if virtue—a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards, including chastity⁸—were reinstated in our society as a most highly prized value? If immorality, pornography, and abuse decreased, would there be fewer broken marriages, broken lives, and broken hearts? Would media ennoble and enable rather than objectify and degrade God’s precious daughters? If all humanity really understood the importance of the statement “We are daughters of our Heavenly Father,”

how would women be regarded and treated?

Several years ago, as this Conference Center was being built and nearing completion, I entered this sacred building on the balcony level in a hard hat and safety glasses, ready to vacuum the carpet that my husband was helping to install. Where the rostrum now stands was a front-end loader moving dirt, and the dust in this building was thick. When it settled, it did so on the new carpet. My part was to vacuum. And so I vacuumed and vacuumed and vacuumed. After three days my little vacuum burned up!

The afternoon before the first general conference in this beautiful building, my husband called me. He was about to install the last piece of carpet—under this historic pulpit.

He asked, “What scripture should I write on the back of this carpet?”

And I said, “Mosiah 18:9: ‘Stand as

[a witness] of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.’”

In an extremely challenging world, that is what I see young women and women of this Church doing. They are an influence for good. They are virtuous and exemplary, intelligent and industrious. They are making a difference because they *are* different. They are acting well their part.

Years ago when I was vacuuming this carpet—trying to act well my small part—I didn’t realize that I would one day stand with my feet on the carpet under this pulpit.

Today as a daughter of God, I stand as a witness that He lives. Jesus is the Christ. He is our Redeemer. It is through His infinite atoning sacrifice that I will one day return to live with Him—proven, pure, and sealed in an eternal family. I shall ever praise Him for the privilege of being a woman, a wife, and a mother. I testify that we are led by a prophet of God, President Thomas S. Monson, and I am grateful for righteous men, whose priesthood power blesses my life. And I shall ever be grateful for the strength I receive through the enabling power of the Savior’s infinite Atonement as I continue to strive to “act well [my] part.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2009), 3.
2. Mosiah 18:9.
3. See Matthew O. Richardson, “‘What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part’: John Allan’s Albany Crescent Stone,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 33 (Fall 2007), 31–61; Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (1986), 45.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 21.
6. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
7. See Moroni 9:9.
8. See *Young Women Personal Progress*, 70.