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Keeping Covenants Protects Us, Prepares Us, and Empowers Us

We are covenant-making women of all ages walking the path of mortality back to His presence.

Oh, sisters, we love you. While visiting Mexico recently, I had a glimpse of the sisterhood we are all feeling tonight. Imagine this scene: We had just finished Primary on Sunday morning, and the children, teachers, and I were spilling out into the crowded hallway. Just then the door to the Young Women class opened, and I saw the young women and their leaders. We all reached out for a hug. With the children holding onto my skirt and the women close around me, I wanted to express the feelings I felt at that very moment.

I do not speak Spanish, so only English words came into my mind. I looked into all of their faces and said, "We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love Him." Everyone immediately joined in, in Spanish. There we were in a crowded hallway, reciting together the Young Women theme as we said, "We will stand as witnesses of God at

all times and in all things, and in all places."

Tonight we gather together all over the world as His disciples, with a desire to defend and sustain the kingdom of God. We are daughters of our Heavenly Father. We are covenant-making women of all ages walking

the path of mortality back to His presence. Keeping covenants protects us, prepares us, and empowers us.

There are girls among us tonight who are Primary age. Some of you have recently taken that first step on the path to eternal life with the ordinance of baptism.

Look around you. The future is bright as you see women who have also made covenants and are ready to show you the way along the path ahead.

If you are 8, 9, 10, or 11 years old, whether in the Conference Center, in your home, or in a meetinghouse around the world, would you please stand up? Welcome to the general women's meeting. Now, please stay standing because we want to invite you tonight to participate. I am going to hum a Primary song. And as soon as you recognize the tune, will you begin singing with me? Now, you must sing out so all can hear.

*Teach me to walk in the light of his love;
Teach me to pray to my Father above;
Teach me to know of the things that
are right;
Teach me, teach me to walk in the light.*



Mexico City, Mexico

Stay standing, girls, while everyone 12 and older now sings the second verse.

*Come, little child, and together we'll learn
Of his commandments, that we may return
Home to his presence, to live in his sight—
Always, always to walk in the light.¹*

That was beautiful. You may sit down. Thank you.

As women of all ages, we walk in His light. Our journey on the path is personal and well lit with the Savior's love.

We enter the gate to the path of eternal life with the ordinance and covenant of baptism, and then we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Elder Robert D. Hales asks us, "Do [we] understand and do [our] children understand that when [we] are baptized [we] are changed forever?"

He also explained that "when we understand our baptismal covenant and the gift of the Holy Ghost, it will change our lives and will establish our total allegiance to the kingdom of God. When temptations come our way, if we will listen, the Holy Ghost will remind us that we have promised to remember our Savior and obey the commandments of God."²

Each week as we partake of the emblems of the sacrament, we renew our baptismal covenant. Elder David A. Bednar said: "As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple. As we partake of the sacrament, we look to the temple. We pledge to always remember the Savior and to keep His commandments as preparation to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple."³



Temple ordinances lead to the greatest blessings available through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. They are those ordinances necessary for our exaltation in the celestial kingdom. As we strive to keep our covenants, our feelings of inadequacy and imperfection begin to fade, while the ordinances and the covenants of the temple come alive. Everyone is welcome to walk that path to eternal life.

I am in awe at the strength of the girls, young women, and women I have met around the world whose feet are firmly planted on this path. Let me share some examples of covenant girls and women I have met.

Luana was 11 years old when I visited her family in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Because of a traumatic event in her childhood, Luana could not speak. She had not spoken for years. She sat silently as we all conversed. I kept hoping for even a whisper from her. She looked at me intently as if uttering words were not necessary for me to know her heart.

After a prayer, we stood up to leave, and Luana handed me a drawing. She had drawn Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. I then recognized her witness loud and clear. Luana had made a covenant at baptism to stand as a witness of God "at all times and in all things, and in all places."⁴ She understood the Atonement of Jesus Christ, as witnessed through her drawing. Had she come to know that, through the strengthening and enabling power of the Atonement, she could be healed and speak again? Since that day three years ago, Luana has progressed in her effort to speak. She is now participating in Young Women with her friends. Faithful to the covenant she made at baptism, she continues to share her witness of the Savior.

Youth all over the world are drawn to temples. In Lima, Peru, I met a father and three of his daughters outside the entrance of the temple. I saw the light in their faces. Two of the daughters were severely disabled and sitting in wheelchairs. The third

daughter, while attending to her sisters' needs, explained she had two more sisters at home. They too were in wheelchairs. They were unable to travel the 14 hours to the temple. The temple meant so much to this father and his daughters that four of them had come to the temple that day—two of them simply to observe the one who could be baptized for the dead and perform that sacred ordinance. Like Nephi, they “[delighted] in the covenants of the Lord.”⁵

A single woman I know values the weekly ordinance of the sacrament

and its sacred promise “that [she] may always have his Spirit to be with [her].”⁶ That constant companionship is a promise that softens the waves of her loneliness. It gives her strength to immerse herself in developing her talents and a desire to serve the Lord. She has discovered great joy in adoring all the children in her life, and when she seeks serene peace, you will find her in the temple.

Lastly, an elderly woman in her 90s has watched her children and grandchildren grow up and her great-grandchildren come into the world. Like

many of us, she has had a life filled with sorrows, afflictions, and incomprehensible joy. She confesses that if she were rewriting her life story, she would not choose to include some of the chapters that have been written. Yet, with a smile, she says, “I just must live a little longer and see how it all turns out!” She continues to hold fast to the covenants on the path.

Nephi taught:

“After ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. . . .

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”⁷

Each one of us is on that path. Tonight we sang about walking the path in the light. As individuals, we are strong. Together with God, we are unstoppable.

The Lord said to Emma Smith, “Lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made.”⁸

We do rejoice that through keeping our covenants, we may feel the love of our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ. I testify that They live. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “Teach Me to Walk in the Light,” *Hymns*, no. 304; or *Children’s Songbook*, 177.
2. Robert D. Hales, “The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 8, 7; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 8, 7.
3. David A. Bednar, “Honorably Hold a Name and Standing,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 98.
4. Mosiah 18:9.
5. 2 Nephi 11:5.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
7. 2 Nephi 31:19–20.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 25:13.

