

Cherish **VIRTUE**



BY ELAINE S.
DALTON

Young Women
General President

The paths of virtue lead to happiness in this life and in the life to come.

Here's why "Virtue" has been added to the Young Women theme.

Several years ago I went on a backpacking trip in the Teton Mountains of Wyoming with a group of young women. It was a difficult hike, and on the second day we arrived at the most dangerous part of the hike. We were going to hike along Hurricane Pass—aptly named because of the strong winds which almost always blow there. We were instructed by a ranger to stay in the center of the path, stay as low as possible on the exposed part of the trail, secure everything in our packs, and move quickly. This was no spot for photographs or for lingering. I was very relieved and happy when each one of the young women had navigated that spot successfully. And do you know—not one of them asked how close to the edge they could get!

Sometimes as we walk life's paths, we want to loiter in dangerous places, thinking that it is fun and thrilling and that we are in control. Sometimes we think we can live on the edge and still maintain our virtue. But that is a risky place to be. As the Prophet Joseph Smith told us, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue" (*History of the Church*, 5:134–35).

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord

gives counsel to one of His precious daughters, Emma Smith, to be faithful and to "walk in the paths of virtue before me" (D&C 25:2). The Lord's advice to Emma Smith is also His advice to all His precious daughters. What are those paths and what is virtue?

Virtue is a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards. It encompasses chastity and moral purity. Virtue includes modesty—in thought, language, dress, and demeanor. Virtue provides an anchor on the path leading to our Heavenly Father's presence. The paths of virtue lead to happiness in this life and in the life to come. The paths of virtue lead to strong families. The paths of virtue contain the foundation stones for the blessings of eternity. They lead to the temple. No wonder Joseph Smith said, "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

In another revelation the Lord promises each of us that if we "let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly," we will have confidence. He promises that our "confidence [will] wax strong" and "the Holy Ghost will be [our] constant companion" (D&C 121:45–46). Living the standards helps each of us stay on the paths of virtue. Whenever we are worthy of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, we can always be assured that the daily decisions we each



make will be correct even when they are difficult.

In a world that surrounds us with sights and sounds, music and messages that are less than virtuous, is a return to virtue even possible? And what about those of us who have made mistakes along the way? President Monson has said to those who have made mistakes, "If any of you has slipped along the way, there are those who will help you to once again become clean and worthy. Your bishop or branch president is anxious and willing to help and will, with understanding and compassion, do all within his power to assist you in the repentance process, that you may once again stand in righteousness before the Lord" ("Examples of Righteousness," *Ensign*, May 2008, 65–66).

All over the world young women are living lives of virtue and purity. It shows in your eyes and radiates in the light that shines forth from your countenance. Never has there been a time in the history of the world when virtue is more needed.

The blessings and promises of being virtuous will help you be free and happy and worthy to enter the Lord's holy temples. For this reason we have added "virtue" to the Young Women values and theme. Each week when you repeat the theme, I hope you will be reminded of what it means to cherish virtue. **NE**