



Illustration by Ann Weaver

G R O W I N G U P

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TOMORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY A BIG ONE YET I INCLUDE MYSELF TONIGHT AS I ISSUE A CLARION CALL FOR US TO GROW UP. I AM NOT SPEAKING IN TERMS OF OUR SIZE OR OUR AGE; I AM SPEAKING IN TERMS OF OUR SOULS. THE ADVERSARY IN THESE LAST DAYS IS SEEKING WITH FERVOR TO CALL US HIS OWN. WE MUST BALANCE HIS ATTACKS, OFTEN SUBTLE AND SOFT SPOKEN, BY OUR INCREASED SPIRITUALITY. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO MERELY BELIEVE. WE

THIS
FIRESIDE
ADDRESS
WAS GIVEN
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must be passionate in our belief and in our commitment to Jesus Christ and his gospel plan. We must know—unequivocally—that he is with us always, and that he will guide and direct us as we work toward our own salvation. • The Lord loves an honest heart and a contrite spirit. He loves those who are meek and humble, those who rejoice not in the victories of the world, but in the victories over the world. He loves those moments when we choose to stand for the right, when we sacrifice a good time for a great moment in his service. To do so requires spiritual maturity. • Put simply, spiritual maturity is

understanding that life is a process to help us become like God. Being well grounded in the gospel helps us place one foot clearly in front of the other, on a path less popular to the masses but well traveled by the followers of the Savior.

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord has stated plainly, "I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, . . . for my commandments are spiritual." (D&C 29:34–35). Though we know that to be true, we tend to compartmentalize our lives. We have our Church work, our families, our social life, our professions, and our possessions. To become spiritually mature means to merge all these into one whole, to expect that in this life we will live by the standards the Lord has set for us—for the eternities. To be spiritually mature is to be comfortable with such a singular purpose.

Spiritual maturity embraces knowledge and learning. Elder G. Homer Durham, a former university president and member of the First Quorum of the Seventy said,

The responsibility to learn has greater significance for woman today than ever before.

Woman has not only to learn, but also to use wisely that which she learns. The world of knowledge is before her. She must enter it and proceed to the limits of her capacity. She begins by knowing that she is a child of God and recognizing what that portends. ["Woman's Responsibility to Learn," in *Woman* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979), 32–33.]

Spiritual maturity also suggests application, devotion, clarity of thought, joy, peace, and love. It means accepting who we are and where we are. Since I have been called to this position in the Church, I have prayed for the capacity to form relationships, in particular, meaningful spiritual bonds with women. I have tried to understand their experiences, to feel the height and depth of their difficulties. The Lord has answered my prayers. I do feel warmth and concern and love for all of his children. I

feel love for all of you sitting in this room with me tonight. Believe me when I say that.

As I have talked with women and men in countries, diverse in their languages and cultural traditions, I find that though circumstances may vary, basic challenges are the same. I have listened to a single mother with a menial job who prays fervently that her child support will arrive every month in the mail. I have been chastised by a woman physician, a captain in the Navy, who wants to be heard and understood. I have watched a woman

hard labor, and humble circumstance who would respond to the counsel, "Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do" (2 Nephi 31:12). He recognized the spiritual strength of these men.

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. [Matthew 4:18–20]

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entrepreneur in Indonesia who operates a guest house not to pay the rent but to provide jobs for her LDS sisters. I have heard repeatedly from women who struggle with managing a home and family, largely alone, because their husbands balance both demanding professions and church callings. I have had long conversations with university professors who have learned to steady their devotion to academics with spiritual resolve. What I see is that no matter the setting or situation, these saints are looking at their lives with spiritual eyes. They have developed the spiritual maturity necessary to feel secure in the decisions that are theirs. They know what it means to be a son or daughter of a loving Heavenly Father.

The scriptures have many examples of those who have understood the charge, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). Indeed the admonition, "By their works ye shall know them" (Moroni 7:5) speaks of the opportunity to make a difference rather than simply to make a name or a place.

When the Savior picked his disciples, he chose those seasoned by experience,

Contrast their actions with the young man described in Matthew who approached the Good Master asking, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" The Lord reiterated his commandments concluding, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The young man saith unto him, all these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. [Matthew 19:16–22]

Where are we spiritually? Have we lost sight of our purpose because of our worldly treasures? Would we respond with the conviction of Peter—as did Sariah and Lehi when they fled Jerusalem—as did the saints when they abandoned Nauvoo and their newly built temple? Few of us are asked to drop everything and come now. But being spiritually prepared means being on call when the Lord says "follow me."

It isn't always easy. We must learn to include the Lord in our decisions and listen to his counsel as we steer our course. I know of a young woman, when about the age of many of you, who was graduating from college and preparing to go to graduate school. Just days before her departure to the East, she was sitting on the couch in her home reading a news magazine that had a prominent feminist splashed on the front cover. This is what she describes:

I was captivated by the picture on the front. This female leader looked bright and enthused about her life and her opportunities. I wanted to be just like her. I wanted to do those things she had done. I, too, wanted to make such a difference. I wanted to be on the front cover of Newsweek magazine.

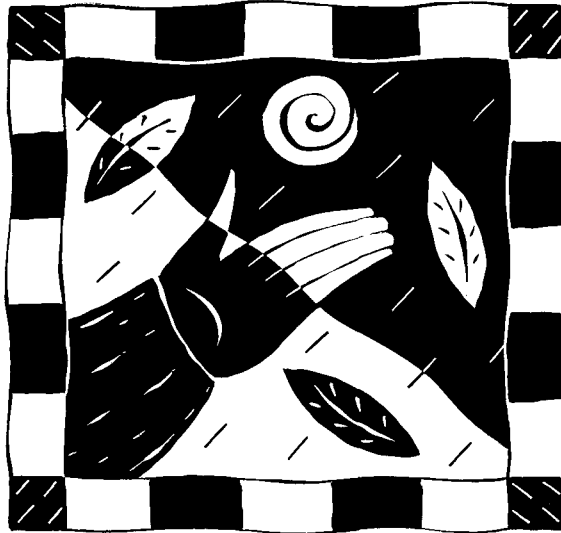
As I mused about that future course a voice spoke clearly in my mind. I was a good member of the Church who had been taught well and raised to have a testimony. I was bright, independent, almost driven. I was used to making my decisions with the intelligence and savvy the Lord had given me, and I'd been successful.

So this voice was not a typical experience. It said, "That's how Satan gets to people like you; he leads them away from the work of the Lord." I was startled. That certainly was not the direction I had been pursuing in my mind. I was thinking about becoming somebody. As I continued to read of this woman's reach, the voice came again, "That's how Satan gets to people like you; he leads them away from the work of the Lord." Uncomfortable with what was happening, I left the room and tried another setting for my reading. The message came again.

My friend knew the Lord was talking to her. She'd never had such direct counsel. What do you think she did? No, she did not leap up, embrace a new way of life and start to can peach-

es. She stayed on her course. But there were changes.

She learned much that fall. Yes, she became well schooled in her discipline, but the much more dramatic growth occurred in spiritual dimensions. Her original goals for fame and the spotlight faded quickly as she saw opportunities to use her abilities, interests, and



talents in the Lord's service. She had heard, "Follow me," and she could not deny it. The challenge for her was to determine just how she could best serve the Lord with what she knew how to do so well.

Her contributions today are not focused on worldly causes. She's never been on the cover of *Newsweek*; in fact, her name doesn't always appear on the books and chapters she writes or compiles. But she has come to understand that spiritual maturity is not so much what you do—but how you do it and for whom.

Another critical factor in our spiritual maturity is the way we treat each other. Jesus taught his disciples, "Suffer the little children to come unto me" (Mark 10:14) and "He that is without sin . . . let him first cast a

stone" (John 8:7). Look at how you deal with others—particularly in this highly competitive environment. Is respect for one another paramount in your relationships? Do you value those friends who stand by you or only those who can take you someplace? Have you caused pain to another or received a high score that was not earned, but borrowed? Do you lack respect for the personal goals, direction and pursuits of others? What can you learn from the Nephites and Lamanites who took such detours?

Today at this law school you share opportunities to learn and grow. Your experiences are so valuable. In you is a balance that will not be found in many graduates at other campuses. You are students who know God's will and appreciate that blessings come from living close to the Lord and touching others with your goodness. By your example, with your eyes single to the glory of God, you will teach and reach others. This will be a most significant contribution. I promise you.

Because of your training at this great institution, you have much to offer. Jack Welsh, president of General Electric, described such opportunities when he said, "We need to make jobs big enough for the human spirit and still be winners in the marketplace." I'd like to turn that around to say "We need to create human spirits big enough for the job." As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are in the "business of saving souls," our own and others'.

Your spiritual and professional strengths will be most valuable when applied to saving souls. Start now to embrace the best in everyone. Start with each other. This is work for us all—men and women—if we are to fight for righteousness in a world captivated by pleasure and pride. In Mosiah we read, "Ye shall not esteem one flesh

above another, or one man shall not think himself above another" (Mosiah 23:7). President George Albert Smith used to say it this way: "We are all our Father's children" (inscribed on his gravestone, Salt Lake City Cemetery). What we have in common are those things that matter most.

When we are spiritually mature we put the Lord first. For example, by reading the scriptures every day we keep our lives centered on his commandments, not the strident voices demanding their reform. President Benson has told us to read the scriptures with particular focus on the Book of Mormon. He has said,

I bless you with increased understanding of the Book of Mormon. I promise you that from this moment forward, if we will daily sup from its pages and abide by its precepts, God will pour out upon each child of Zion and the Church a blessing hitherto unknown. ["A Sacred Responsibility," *Ensign* (May 1986): 78]

The scriptures are full of inspiration and truth that can be an anchor to our lives no matter the situation. While we often look to the scriptures to receive comfort, to help us resolve problems or to point the way to repentance, we should use the scriptures as a guide to gladness as well. It is stated so well in the Old Testament: "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:18). Did you know there are 387 references in the standard works to rejoicing and another 363 references to joy? Doesn't that say something about being jubilant? This is a joyous gospel!

The Lord can speak to us in the scriptures. He also speaks with a still, small voice, and if we listen we will hear. Notice how we have to *do* something. Spiritual maturity has nothing to do with age and everything to do with experience. Our spiritual development cannot be set aside for a time down the road when our professions are in place, our jobs are secure, our finances are adequate, and our children are raised. We must address the world each day for what we can learn, understand, contribute, and restore. Our goal is clearly

stated in Philippians: "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

Let me share a story of a friend who learned to press forward with full faith in Christ. He's a lawyer with four children who after 20 years of practice left his position as a partner in a large firm. He was weary of the bickering, the angry outbursts among his associates, and the questionable practices that profited the firm's bottom line but compromised his integrity.

He and a friend, a busy bishop, set up a partnership. It was a tough transition to leave a firm of multiple clients and set up shop hoping clients would come. He had made the break for the right reasons, putting his spiritual concerns first, but the heavens did not open. No one came for his services; he struggled. He implemented all the client generation techniques he knew. Many of us would have started to second-guess the decision. Not my friend. He read the scriptures with intensity every day until he felt the spirit strongly. He served sincerely in his Church callings. He made covenants with the Lord. He turned to the only resource he had left. He asked his Father in Heaven to help. But he didn't ask alone. He brought his family together and asked his children to pray that work would come.

And then he went to work. At night his children would question, "Dad, did we pray anybody in today?" Indeed the pleas to the Lord were successful, and he soon had more clients than he needed. They still pray in that family for work—and the work keeps coming.

President Ezra Taft Benson has spoken decisively about being yoked to God:

Men and women who turn their lives over to God will find out that he can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen

their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends and pour out peace. ["Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," in *Speeches of the Year, 1974* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 310]

That's not unrealistic. If we turn our lives over to God it doesn't mean that he will make our decisions or solve our problems. It means he will be with us. Elder Bruce R. McConkie describes such spirituality as "that state of holiness, purity and relative perfection which enables men to enjoy the near-constant companionship of the Lord's spirit" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 760). Frequent promptings and personal revelation through the Holy Ghost are part of that refining process.

Being polished by the Lord calls for sacrifice and courage. The process comes with trials and temptations that are often unrelenting and so enticing. We must recognize problems for what they are and surmount them. In the process we become strong and effective. Spencer W. Kimball, speaking to the saints in 1943 when he was called to be a General Authority, spoke of such conflict. He described the self-doubt he felt as he stepped forward to serve the Lord: "You can't do the work. You are not worthy. You have not the ability"—and then he described that still small voice speaking softly to his soul, "You must do the work assigned—you must make yourself able, worthy, and qualified. . . . And the battle raged on" (in *Conference Report*, October 1943, 16).

Do you feel like that sometimes? On some days do you feel like "master the tempest is raging"? I do. How I plead that I will respond to that spiritual voice that reminds us that in all we do, we must make ourselves "able, worthy, and qualified." We must earn our maturity by effort.

Those who are waiting out their time on earth by merely being busy are missing the measure of their creation—to have joy—to be filled with light and love and to rejoice—all our days. For there is much in this world

to celebrate: We are living. We have the truth. We have been born in these days of the restored gospel. We have the right to choose. The Lord speaks to us and to our leaders. His spirit brings peace to our souls. These blessings are most significant.

Rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord is a mark of the spiritually mature. Our rejoicing reflects our gratitude for all that the Lord has given

not just for the easy things, not just for the good things. We must give thanks for all things.

Our motto in Relief Society is "Charity Never Faileth." We believe in that statement. We live by it. It doesn't mean charity almost always never faileth. It means charity *never* faileth. It is a motto for everyone. To me charity is like the keystone of an arch. It holds everything else in the gospel in place.

Growing up requires that we recognize that this life is the time to prepare to meet God. This world isn't supposed to be perfect. Our Father has given us talents and trials here that we might learn and grow, and along the way help others to find such direction. To be spiritually mature we have to labor all our days. The Lord provides us with the tools: the scriptures, the commandments, latter-day revelation,

BEING WELL GROUNDED

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us. When we are truly grateful, we see the Lord's hand all around us; he is everywhere. In a recent visit to the Philippines, I was touched by the circumstances of the professional women who are well trained but caught in the morass of extremely high unemployment. A 33-year-old returned missionary sister had her medical degree but no means with which to set up a clinic. So she was applying for further training at a local hospital. Waiting for the appointment to come through, she was gratefully treating the members of her ward who couldn't afford doctors' fees. She had made herself able, worthy, and qualified and the Lord was blessing others through her skill. They had cause to be grateful for her; she had cause to be grateful for them. We are all in this together.

Another mother expressed great thanks that her two daughters were completing their training as midwives. She told me proudly that one had earned the highest marks in the whole country. It would take three years to pay off the debt, two more daughters were ready to be educated, and the roof was leaking. Life was hard. Yet these women understand 1 Thessalonians: "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). We must give thanks not just for the splendid things,

The prophet Mormon defines charity as "the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47). Love is essential to spiritual maturity. We hear so much lately of the changes taking place around the world. I think the transformations are not so much what is happening in the headlines but what is happening in hearts and homes. People are hungry for meaning and purpose and love. The Lord said, "As I have loved you, love one another" (John 13:34). To love so sincerely is the solution to so many woes, so many heavy hearts.

Charity is my business. I am not here to direct, to make decisions for you, or to pass judgment. I am here to support your righteous desires and encourage you to press forward with a steadfastness in Christ.

I spoke to a bishop on the East Coast last week who was dealing with a thorny problem involving a woman in his ward. Without disclosing the details he recounted to me his comments to her. "I can't make that decision for you. But I will support you in your decision because I trust you and respect your ability to make that decision righteously." This was a disciple of the Lord reaching out to another and exercising pure love. Charity never faileth. I know that.

Join me tonight in praising the most high God, whose work this is

prophets, the Holy Ghost, and other people, like family, friends, fellow students, and neighbors.

Do you remember people asking when you were small, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Well, here we are, kind of grown up. I think we know what we want to be—followers of Jesus Christ. Each of us, in our own arena, from a guest house in Indonesia to the Law School at BYU, can choose to follow Jesus Christ. Such spiritual maturity means developing an attitude that directs the way we see things, dictates the order in which we do things, and focuses our attention on things that really matter.

The power to sustain this level of devotion to the Father and his principles is within our reach. To bring souls unto Christ, ours in particular, is the essence of God's plan. We must love what he loves, value what he teaches, and labor where he needs us. Let me leave you with the finest example of such spiritual maturity. It was Jesus Christ who in his last hours went to God in mighty prayer, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

May we all respond to the call to grow up. May we seek to do the will of our Father in Heaven, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.