

**Building Faith in Jesus Christ by Holding Fast to the Iron Rod**  
Young Women Open House Counselors' Update—Spring 2007

**The purpose of the Young Women program.**

“The purpose of the Young Women organization is to help each young woman ‘come unto Christ’ (Moroni 10:32)” (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, 211).

In the 1995 Leadership Training Emphasis, the focus for young women was stated as follows: “Help prepare each young woman to be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple” (“Emphasis for Leaders,” First Presidency Letter, September 1996; a copy of this can be obtained from your priesthood leader).

We bring young women closer to the Savior by preparing them to make and keep sacred temple covenants. (This focus is echoed in all of our publications and with the Young Womanhood Recognition Medallion. All are illustrated with the image of the temple.)

**What issues distract young women from the goal of preparing to come unto Christ through the temple?**

Modesty, chastity, peer pressure, evil media, and many other destructive worldly influences keep young women from preparing for the temple. What don't young women know or understand about the gospel that would make them susceptible to such temptation? Seek the root causes, such as lack of a testimony of Jesus Christ and His Atonement or their identity as a daughter of God. Until young women have a personal conversion, they are much like investigators of the gospel.

Our greatest source for our own learning and for teaching the basic doctrines young women need to understand is the scriptures—the iron rod. “What meaneth the rod of iron? . . . And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 15:23–24).

**Strengthen young women through the scriptures and help them feel the Spirit.**

“As water is necessary to sustain physical life, so the Savior and His doctrines, principles, and ordinances are essential for eternal life. You and I need His living water daily and in ample supply to sustain our ongoing spiritual growth and development” (David A. Bednar, “A Reservoir of Living Water,” CES Fireside for Young Adults, February 4, 2007).

Leaders need to turn to the scriptures to seek guidance in our efforts to strengthen young women. Seek answers in the scriptures to root causes and questions young women have. Give young women the confidence that they can personally turn to the scriptures daily to find strength and find answers.

Put their hand firmly on the rod of iron and walk with them along the path for this season of Young Women. Sister Tanner shared this hope for young women in a recent address: “I pray that you will use this time in your youth to feast on the scriptures, to set a pattern to follow throughout your life, to invite personal revelation through the scriptures and learning the doctrine of Jesus Christ” (Susan W. Tanner, “Scriptures—More Precious Than Gold and Sweeter Than Honey,” CES Fireside for Young Adults, September 11, 2005).

“What a glorious blessing! For when we want to speak to God, we pray. And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures; for His words are spoken through His prophets. He will then teach us as we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. If you have not heard His voice speaking to you lately, return with new eyes and new ears to the scriptures. They are our spiritual lifeline” (Robert D. Hales, “Holy Scriptures: The Power of God unto Our Salvation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 26–27).

*The following recent teachings offer additional support.*

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### **Help young women find answers in the scriptures.**

Robert D. Hales, “The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” Seminar for New Mission Presidents, June 2006:

*Elder Hales’ instruction to the mission presidents can assist us as we teach and interact with young women. We, as leaders, are like missionaries, working with our investigators—our young women—hoping to strengthen their conversion to the gospel and help them establish a firm testimony that will carry them through many years of faithful membership.*

“If the [leaders] will read and study the basic doctrine, they will come to understand faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, the plan of salvation, which the Book of Mormon clearly teaches, and the revelations of the prophets of every dispensation.

“Seek answers to the needs of the [young women] through Book of Mormon teachings. If the [leaders] can understand the questions their [young women] are asking and can give answers through the Book of Mormon, [leaders] then will have the [young women] turning to the Book of Mormon to find answers for themselves. It is so important for the [leaders] to ask the [young women] to turn to the Book of Mormon and read about the principles which they have been taught. Reading assignments from [leaders] as a part of the teaching of the discussions is essential.

“Then, the first thing that [leaders] should do when they come back to talk to those [young women] again is to pick up where they left off, to see whether the people have completed the assignment to read in the Book of Mormon. If they have not, the [leaders] go back to where they began, and read from the Book of Mormon. They can teach, and then they can give them another assignment.

“If they instill this process in the heart of the [young women], that begins the personal search and the personal study and, hopefully, the personal prayer, as the [young woman] seeks for [her] own testimony. When the [leader] leaves the [young women] or the new

members, they then have before them the scriptures. They have the Bible, and they have the Book of Mormon. It is so important that we understand the importance of these documents. These scriptures, the testimonies of the prophets of all dispensations, will strengthen that [young woman] after the [leader] is gone.

“Even with fellowship from the members and from the priesthood, which should follow the teaching from the [leaders], it is still necessary for the individual to read and to study and to get close to the Lord. Unfortunately, there is no way for [leaders] or any of the rest of us to transfer our testimony to someone else. They, in their heart, must have a desire to have a testimony and develop that spiritual taproot deep within them. That is how they hold to the rod when they face the fiery darts of the adversary and the winds that blow against them. That enables them to hold to the rod and to stand tall.”

**Help young women hold fast to the iron rod.**

David A. Bednar, “A Reservoir of Living Water,” CES Fireside for Young Adults, February 4, 2007:

“Are you and I daily reading, studying, and searching the scriptures in a way that enables us to hold fast to the rod of iron—or are you and I merely clinging? Are you and I pressing forward toward the fountain of living waters—relying upon the word of God? These are important questions for each of us to ponder prayerfully. . . .

“I witness of Jesus Christ and of the power of His word and of Him as the Word. He is the Son of the Eternal Father, and I know that He lives. I testify that holding fast to the rod of iron will lead to His living water. As His servant, I invoke this blessing upon you: that your desire and capacity to hold fast to the rod of iron will be enlarged, that your faith in the Savior will increase and replace your fears, and that as you drink deeply from the scriptural reservoir you will come to know Him. May we ever remember that

*When temptation's power is nigh,  
Our pathway clouded o'er,  
Upon the rod we can rely,  
And heaven's aid implore.  
(Hymns, no. 274).”*

**Teach young women to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.**

Henry B. Eyring, “An Enduring Testimony of the Mission of the Prophet Joseph,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 90:

“The Spirit will testify the truth to their hearts every time they read in the scriptures which came to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And the Spirit will confirm again that God spoke through His prophet.

“Teach them to ponder the scriptures every day, with faith that they will be taught by the Spirit.”

**The Spirit is the teacher. Wait patiently upon the Spirit.**

Henry B. Eyring, "Teaching by the Spirit," Seminar for New Mission Presidents, June 2006:

*In his address to mission presidents, Elder Eyring talks of the desire for missionaries (and we might add young women) to feel the Spirit and receive personal revelation. This does not always occur on demand, and they may get discouraged. We as leaders may be able to help.*

"You need to know how to help them. You will urge them to pray. You will tell them that the scriptures can open the windows of heaven for them. You will tell them to keep the commandments in thought and deed.

"But I give you additional counsel, which comes from the help I received from the presidents under whom I have served. One of them, President Boyd K. Packer, summarizes best. . . . 'You can no more force the Spirit to respond than you can force a bean to sprout, or an egg to hatch before its time. You can create a climate to foster growth, nourish, and protect; but you cannot force or compel: you must await the growth' ('The Candle of the Lord,' *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, p. 53; quoted in *Preach My Gospel*, p. 102). I testify to you that is true doctrine. It points the way for you to help."

**Study the scriptures with young women in mind and act upon the promptings of the Spirit that come to you.**

Henry B. Eyring, "Teaching by the Spirit," Seminar for New Mission Presidents, June 2006:

"So when the Holy Ghost touches you about the need of a [young woman] . . . move. Reach out to them. It will build their faith. It will build their faith that the Savior knows them and their hearts. It will build faith that there is revelation and that they might receive it, too. And by the way you treat them they may feel hope that God can heal all their wounds, and they may feel His love."