

# Our Sacred Honor

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**M**y subject today concerns one of the values from the Young Women Theme. I suspect that almost all of the women in the audience are familiar with this standard and could say it with me. As an introduction to my topic, would the women stand and repeat with me the Young Women Theme:

*We are daughters of our Heavenly Father who loves us, and we love him. We will “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” as we strive to live the Young Women Values, which are:*

*Faith  
Divine Nature  
Individual Worth  
Knowledge  
Choice and Accountability  
Good Works and  
Integrity*

*We believe as we come to accept and act upon these values, we will be prepared to make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation. (See Mosiah 18:9.) [Personal Progress (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), p. 6]*

Thank you for assisting me. There is power in unity. We hope that the brethren realize not only how beautiful you are but appreciate your commitment to these principles.

All of us are on earth for a sacred and glorious purpose. It is not by chance that you have been reserved for this time—the dispensation of the fullness of times. Your birth was foreordained in the eternities. You are the “youth of the noble birthright” (“Carry On,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 255).

In a very literal sense you are children of God. He is the Father of your spirit. Elder Boyd K. Packer said, “Spiritually you are of noble birth. . . . However many generations [there may be] in your mortal ancestry . . . , the pedigree of your spirit can be written on a single line. You are a child of God!” (“The Message: Your Test of Courage,” *New Era*, March 1990, p. 6). You have inherited your spiritual DNA from God the Father.

The Young Women Theme lists seven important virtues that we must come to understand and incorporate in our lives. As these virtues or principles are internalized, they give

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*Marilyn S. Bateman, the wife of Merrill J. Bateman, gave this devotional address on 8 September 1998.*

us the power to “keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation.”

Today I will focus on the value of integrity. It is one of the cornerstones of character. Integrity implies honesty, moral soundness, and a quality of being undivided. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “A [person] of integrity is . . . particularly strict about fulfilling the trusts reposed in him by others” (*MD*, p. 385). President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated, “Without personal integrity, there can be no confidence. Without confidence there can be no prospect of permanent success” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1997], p. 267).

The first part of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America establishes that all people have certain rights that include life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Americans, as well as those of other nationalities, are passionate about their rights and the protection of those rights. In fact, many go to great lengths in asserting them. As I have thought about the concern that people have with rights, I believe it would be well for all of us to pay attention to the last line in the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson concluded the document with these words: “We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

The last paragraph of the declaration is as important as the earlier ones. The signers of the Declaration of Independence pledged everything they owned, including their lives and their sacred honor, in order for America to become a free nation. Today we enjoy the blessings of a free land because of their sacrifice. The signers knew the risks when they put their names on the document. The declaration represented an act of treason against the British Crown. The penalty was death by hanging if caught. Each became a hunted man.

One of the signers, Francis Lewis, a delegate from New York, “saw his home plundered

and his estates completely destroyed by British soldiers. His wife was captured and treated with brutality. Though she was later exchanged for two British prisoners through the efforts of Congress, she died from her abuse” (Rush Limbaugh, Jr., “Lives, Fortunes, Sacred Honor,” *Reader’s Digest*, July 1998, p. 165). Other signers experienced similar fates. Some lost their lives. Some of their family members lost theirs. Many lost their fortunes in support of the patriotic cause. But all of them were true to the promise of loyalty to their new country and to each other.

As citizens today we have a claim on the rights earned by these early patriots. It is my belief that the great land of America and its citizens also have claim on each person to be honest and true—to be people of integrity.

Honesty is one of the basic elements of integrity. One’s honor is based on personal integrity maintained without legal or other obligations. President Ezra Taft Benson said:

*An honorable man or woman is one who is truthful; free from deceit; above cheating, lying, stealing, or any form of deception. An honorable man or woman is one who learns early that one cannot do wrong and feel right. A man’s [or a woman’s] character is judged on how he [or she] keeps his word and his agreements. [TETB, p. 368]*

Mohandas K. Gandhi is one of the greatest statesmen of this century. He is honored and revered in his country as one of its most dedicated leaders. He was known for his integrity. A story about Gandhi illustrates his desire for his actions to be congruent with his beliefs, regardless of the cost. Gandhi’s “mother taught him that to eat meat was wrong, inasmuch as it necessitated the destruction of life, so Gandhi pledged to his mother that he would remain a strict vegetarian throughout his life.” Later, Gandhi became seriously ill. “His physicians tried to persuade him that if he would drink a little beef broth, his life might be saved, but

Gandhi said, ‘Even for life itself we may not do certain things. There is only one course open to me—to die, but never to break my pledge.’” Because of his integrity, his “followers renamed him the Mahatma, or the Great Soul” (Sterling W. Sill, *The Laws of Success* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1975], pp. 186–87). We may or may not agree with Gandhi’s commitment, but we admire his honor. To him the pledge made to his mother was sacred.

Each person at Brigham Young University has given his or her pledge that they will abide by the principles set forth in the Honor Code. Because of that commitment, you have been admitted to the university. It is a serious pledge because your honor is at stake. How you keep your word defines who you are. The fastest way to lose your good character is to break the pledge. “Great Learning and superior abilities, should you ever possess them,” Abigail Adams told her son, John Quincy, “will be of little value and small Estimation, unless Virtue, Honour, Truth and integrity [*sic*] are added to them” (in William J. Bennett, ed., *Our Sacred Honor* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997], p. 219).

BYU is a “city . . . set on an hill [which] cannot be hid” (Matthew 5:14). What happens here is noted throughout the country. There are millions of people watching our moves and listening to our words. Each of us is a represen-

tative of the whole. If we live honest, true lives, the attribution is to everyone. If some lack honor and integrity, it reflects on all of us as well. There is much expected, given our moral code and standards of behavior. The ways of the world are constantly challenging us to compromise. We may not be at war with nations presently, but we are at war with many of society’s standards.

Members of the BYU community are covenant makers. Covenants with God are not to be taken lightly. In Doctrine and Covenants 98:14, the Lord says, “I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy.” President James E. Faust said:

*Complete and constant integrity is a great law of human conduct. There need to be some absolutes in life. There are some things that should not ever be done, some lines that should never be crossed, vows that should never be broken, words that should never be spoken, and thoughts that should never be entertained. [“Integrity, the Mother of Many Virtues,” *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 48]*

My dear friends, maintain your integrity. Stay true to yourselves. Seek to live by the Spirit. May we all strive to live the commandments in my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.