

The Modern Mighty Women of Israel

M. JOSEPH BROUGH

What a privilege it has been to enjoy the recent general conference. I thought of one thing that happened that I would like to share with you before I begin my remarks. I was at a fairly public setting with an apostle, the Primary general presidency, and the Young Men general presidency. In that meeting, the Primary general president and the Young Men general president were saving a seat for this apostle toward the front of the room. Like most of you, I was sitting toward the back, saving a seat for the other counselor on my right-hand side.

I walked this apostle. He came right up to my side and said, “Joe, is it okay if I sit here?”

Well, what was I going to say: “No, you are supposed to sit up there?”

So he sat down at my side. After a few moments I could tell that he wasn’t feeling well. He grabbed my wrist and said, “Joe, I don’t know what is going on. I am not feeling well.”

I encouraged him to go back to his room, and I said that we had this. We could inform him what had happened later on. I knew he had an upcoming trip to Asia for about ten days.

But he stayed. I could see a little bit of sweat on the side of his face. He took a drink of his water

and then again grabbed my wrist. He said, “I was fine yesterday. I don’t know what is going on. I don’t feel very well.”

Again I encouraged him to go back to his room. But he stayed.

And then once more he grabbed my wrist, and he pulled me a little toward him. He looked me right in the eye and said, “Joe, are you happy?”

I thought, “Are you kidding me? He is sick, and he is worried about me being happy?”

I said, “Yes, I am happy.”

And then he said, “Good. I am in charge of happy.”

I want you to know that those fifteen men who we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators, those who spoke to us this last week, feel that they are responsible for our happiness. So they speak directly, and they ask us to do things. I hope we adhere to what President Russell M. Nelson has said and asked during our general conferences. Let’s run to repentance. Let’s repent quickly.

M. Joseph Brough, second counselor in the Young Men general presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, delivered this devotional address on April 9, 2019.

Impact Teachers: Training Human Souls

Recently I have reread and contemplated two messages that had a tremendous impact on me when I was your age. They were both general conference addresses by members of the Seventy: “The Impact Teacher” and “The Modern Mighty of Israel.”¹

I invite you to review those addresses at some other time. But I would invite you now to consider Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone’s summary of a statement by President David O. McKay: “There is no greater responsibility in the world than the training of a human soul.”²

Before going much further, I would like to introduce my topic with a personal experience. When I was about thirteen years of age, we lived on a cattle ranch in Wyoming. It was a glorious experience for a young man who loved the outdoors. In the spring we often had the experience of having a group of heifers that required constant and watchful care. For those of you who do not know what a heifer is, it is a female cow having her first calf. This situation requires that you check on the heifers about every six hours—including getting up in the middle of the night—so that if a heifer is having a difficult time, she can be assisted and the rancher does not lose the mother and/or the calf.

On one occasion, a rather wild heifer was having difficulty and needed our assistance. My mother, father, and I gathered in the field to try and herd the heifer into a smaller corral in which we could help her. At times such herding can be rather challenging, especially when the herding result is not where the heifer wants to go. We were spread out, with my mother on my left and my father on my right. I was in the middle, being the youngest and the fastest.

As we began to crowd the heifer, she bolted to our left in an attempt to pass between my mother and the fence. My mother ran toward the fence to try and turn the heifer back, but I noticed that the angle she was taking was going to allow the heifer to pass. So I took a deeper angle and ran as well.

I saw my mother slip and dive head first like she was trying to steal second base in the World Series. As you can imagine, in a field full of cattle,

there are these round, fresh, brownish piles everywhere. My mother most gracefully slid through one and was covered literally from her face to her toes. Naturally, it was quite funny, and I began to laugh. My mother, being the great sport she is, also began to laugh. However, the heifer got past both of us, and that was not very pleasing to my father, who was not laughing.

My father ordered us to get around and turn that heifer back toward the corral. To his demand, my mother wisely replied, looking directly at me, “Come on, Joe. We are going to the house. He can do it himself.”

Well, I had a real dilemma. Follow my father or obey my mother? I made the correct choice. I followed my mother!

In the Old Testament, King David’s “mighty men had developed the skills of a warrior to a very high degree. They were determined and, as with the faces of lions, completely without fear. They were prepared for any battle.”³ I believe that some of Heavenly Father’s greatest warriors today could be called “the modern mighty women of Israel.”

*During an attack on [an] English fort outside Orléans, an arrow hit [teenage Joan of Arc] above the breast in plain sight of everyone in the battle. While Joan had her wounds dressed, the French, who had been attacking all day long, faltered. As her troops were retreating, Joan returned, stuck her banner on the edge of the ditch surrounding the fort, and declared, “There should be no retreat.” Both the French and English soldiers who previously thought she was dead—or at least mortally wounded—were shocked. The French gained courage and attacked; the English were afraid and fled.*⁴

With the battle raging between good and evil, I have seen many a modern mighty woman of Israel stick her banner in the ground in her own way as she takes a stand and defends the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained, “I have been remarkably blessed by the moral influence of women, in particular my mother and my wife.”⁵ Likewise, I have been blessed by righteous women, impact teachers who stand in holy places and declare, “There should be no retreat.”

The apostle Paul taught:

Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

*That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*⁶

When I was young, I thought this scripture meant you lived long because your mother did not kill you for being disobedient.

Today I hope that each of us will recommit to bringing honor to our mothers by living the commandments of God. I hope that one of you will text your mother today and tell her that you love her. You can wait until I am finished to do that. On second thought, for some of you who are forgetful, do it now.

Some of you, about half, are starting to say, “Well, he is not talking to me.” Remember, however, that you need one of these mighty women of Israel at your side in eternity. Please do not wait until eternity to find her! That especially goes for my nephews who are here listening today.

For all of you, as you listen, please remember that bringing honor to the mighty women of Israel in your life will bring joy.

With regard to these impact teachers, President Russell M. Nelson said:

*It would be impossible to measure the influence that such women have, not only on families but also on the Lord’s Church, as wives, mothers, and grandmothers; as sisters and aunts; as teachers and leaders; and especially as exemplars and devout defenders of the faith.*⁷

President Dallin H. Oaks paid tribute to one specific modern mighty woman:

During World War II, my widowed mother supported her three young children on a schoolteacher’s salary that was meager. When I became conscious that we went without some desirable things because we didn’t have enough money, I asked my mother why she paid so much of her salary as tithing. I have never forgotten her explanation: “Dallin, there might be some people who can get along without paying tithing, but we can’t. The Lord has chosen to take your father and

*leave me to raise you children. I cannot do that without the blessings of the Lord, and I obtain those blessings by paying an honest tithing. When I pay my tithing, I have the Lord’s promise that he will bless us, and we must have those blessings if we are to get along.”*⁸

Please allow me to describe what such impact teachers have done in my life. I can remember my own mother teaching that same principle of tithing to me. When Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf counseled, “Doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith,”⁹ I truly expected that his next comment would be to use my mother as a living example of that truth. My mother is a faith-filled modern mighty woman in Israel.

My grandmother is also such an example. She was widowed when my father was two years old and one of my uncles only days old. She did not have a high school education. Yet she was a modern mighty woman in Israel. This uncle, who was only days old at the passing of my grandfather, later wrote:

My dad lost his dad three weeks before he was born. His dad was also thirty-three at his passing. His mom died when he was seventeen and therefore had no one to support him on a mission. He wanted all of his sons to serve missions and extracted a promise as he was dying that my mother would see that all of his sons would serve a mission.

As a young man growing up, I was reminded many times of that promise that my mother made to my dad as he was dying—that she would see that each one of his boys would serve missions. I always knew that I would serve a mission. I have always had a testimony of the truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, even though I didn’t always do the right things. I think I was a little like Amulek in the Book of Mormon when he said [Alma 10:5–6]: “I never have known much of the ways of the Lord, and his mysteries and marvelous power. I said I never had known much of these things; but behold, I mistake, for I have seen much of his mysteries and his marvelous power; yea, even in the preservation of the lives of this people. Nevertheless, I did harden my heart, for I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know.”

My grandmother was the one who taught my uncle of the Lord’s mysteries and of His marvelous power. My grandmother kept her promise, even though it required that she work three jobs while supporting two missionaries out in the field at the same time. Additionally, a schoolteacher boarded in her home and added to the family income.

I remember that same grandmother expecting me to continue to fulfill that promise made to my grandfather. She successfully sent all of her grandsons and many of her granddaughters on missions.

Remember what President Nelson said: “It would be impossible to measure the influence that such women have, not only on families but also on the Lord’s Church.” Well, let’s try and measure the impact of this one uneducated—by worldly standards—modern mighty woman of Israel. Her posterity have now given more than 160 years of full-time mission service! Four have served as mission presidents and one as a mission president’s companion. Now, how many missionaries all over the world have been impacted by her? How many were invited and accepted the invitation to come unto Christ and become members of His Church because of one righteous woman? President Nelson is right. We cannot measure the impact of even one such woman, let alone all of them.

Impact Teachers in God’s Plan

Sisters—brethren, you can listen too—not all of you have the same plan in life. Not all of you will look and act exactly the same as you become modern mighty women of Israel. The settings, the challenges, and the circumstances of your lives are unique to the plan that Heavenly Father has for you. So let me suggest four settings in which you might be called upon to be a modern mighty woman of Israel. Your strength is needed in each.

Setting 1: In the Workplace

Sisters, you may be a modern mighty woman of Israel in the workplace. Sister Julie B. Beck said, “To nurture means to cultivate, care for, and make grow.”¹⁰ Recently I was having a particularly difficult day, wrestling with various issues. In one

of the meetings I attended that day, Sister Sharon Eubank of the Relief Society general presidency was present. At the conclusion of the meeting, she kindly asked something like, “Joe, you do not seem like yourself today. Is there something I can do to help?” She probably does not even remember that. I thought I was disguising my feelings very well. As one of the modern mighty women of Israel, she was caring for me as we served together. How simple and yet powerful.

Let me mention another woman I know at Church headquarters. She has no children, yet she has nurtured youth and children as a Young Women president and as a stake Primary president. And she has helped edit every public talk, including this one, that I have given in my calling as a member of the Young Men general presidency. As an impact teacher, she has an ability to help, “cultivate, care for, and make grow” in the process of offering words, thoughts, and meaning that are amazing.

Setting 2: In the Face of Great Tragedy

You may be a modern mighty woman of Israel in the face of great tragedy. One such modern mighty woman of Israel is your age. She served as a missionary with us in Guatemala. She just finished her graduate degree and will soon be getting married. During our service in Guatemala, she and her companion were kidnapped. Heavenly Father would not let me share that difficult and miraculous experience with you today. However, the Spirit does allow me to quote one of the first things she stated upon her safe release: “We taught them [meaning the kidnappers] all of the lessons.”

She recently had to face the loss of her father in a tragic accident. After the accident, but before his passing, she told my wife and me that she knew Heavenly Father had prepared her to face hard things. In a humble and committed manner, she indicated that she was prepared and would valiantly face what Heavenly Father asked of her. Of course she wanted her dad to survive, yet she knew she was prepared to accept the will of Heavenly Father. She taught her mission president what it means to be a modern mighty woman of Israel.

Setting 3: In a Leadership Role

You may be a modern mighty woman of Israel in a leadership role. In his plea to the sisters, President Nelson said, “The kingdom of God is not and cannot be complete without women who make sacred covenants and then keep them, women who can speak with the power and authority of God!”¹¹ The woman who has most affected me and speaks with that power and authority is my beautiful bride.

It is amazing how many times I get credit for what my wife has done. For example, if you ask the missionaries who served with us in Guatemala what one thing they learned in the mission field, invariably they will say something like, “Faith in Jesus Christ combined with exact obedience brings miracles” or “Faith in Jesus Christ and exact obedience give us power.” That is what my wife taught. She taught it at every moment. No, she lived it. Sometimes I get the credit, but she was the actual impact teacher.

She could teach it so simply! She reminded the missionaries that there is no room for doubting when we are exercising faith in Jesus Christ. She lovingly taught that exact obedience was not perfection; rather, it was keeping the commandments as best we can and then, when we fall short, repenting quickly. She would emphasize the *quickly*; it was not tomorrow, but it was true remorse and repenting today.

When the age reduction for missionaries was announced, we received a tremendous influx of sister missionaries. At times we had difficulty selecting the right areas in which we should have sisters serve. As a result, we ended up with a zone in Antigua, Guatemala, where the majority of missionaries were sisters. The area had approximately eight elders and fourteen sisters, if I recall correctly. In one particular zone conference, we were truly focused on the sisters.

However, as my wife was teaching, the Spirit prompted her to pay particular attention to one of the few elders in the meeting. She stopped and walked over in front of one of our district leaders, who was nearing the end of his mission. She looked right in his eyes and said something like, “Elder, do you know that President Brough and

I love you?” I watched that missionary’s eyes fill with tears. I knew him as a very good missionary and thought he obviously knew of our love. Later, in a private setting, he told me that he had decided he was going to return home from his mission and go inactive. He did not feel loved. To be honest, I was shocked. But that moment changed everything.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson said, “Women bring with them into the world a certain virtue, a divine gift that makes them adept at instilling such qualities as faith, courage, empathy, and refinement in relationships and in cultures.”¹² I witnessed that divine gift as my wife cultivated and cared for that missionary in her role as a mission leader. I recently spoke with him. He is strong and active—doing just fine.

Setting 4: In the Home

You may be a modern mighty woman of Israel in your home. Remember, to all of you who are mothers or will be mothers in this life or in the life to come, Elder Christofferson declared:

*In all events, a mother can exert an influence unequaled by any other person in any other relationship. By the power of her example and teaching, her sons learn to respect womanhood and to incorporate discipline and high moral standards in their own lives. Her daughters learn to cultivate their own virtue and to stand up for what is right, again and again, however unpopular. A mother’s love and high expectations lead her children to act responsibly without excuses, to be serious about education and personal development, and to make ongoing contributions to the well-being of all around them.*¹³

I am saddened when I hear one of these impact teachers or modern mighty women of Israel say, “Oh, I am just a mother.” Just a mother! Just a great exemplar and defender of the faith! We must honor those we call “mom.”

In addition to your texting your mother, I would like to invite each of you to reach out today and thank another of those impact teachers or modern mighty women of Israel who has influenced your faith and commitment to the Savior

and His earthly kingdom. Do it now if you need to so you don't forget.

To the mighty women of Israel who have anchored your banner in the ground declaring, "There should be no retreat," we appreciate you! I would like to thank the modern mighty women of Israel in my life who have stood faithfully against the adversary and lived their testimony, declaring that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, and that the Book of Mormon is true. You have influenced me so I can also declare that I know those same things to be true! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Vaughn J. Featherstone, "The Impact Teacher," *Ensign*, November 1976; and Monte J. Brough, "The Modern Mighty of Israel," *Ensign*, November 1993.

2. Featherstone, in "Impact Teacher," paraphrasing David O. McKay, "Guidance of a Human Soul—The Teacher's Greatest Responsibility," *Instructor* 100, no. 9 (September 1965): 343:

"Teachers have the greatest responsibility of anyone in the world—the guidance of a human soul!"

3. Brough, "The Modern Mighty of Israel;" quoting from 1 Chronicles 12:1, 8; see also 2 Samuel 23:8–39.

4. Scott Manning, "Joan of Arc's Military Successes and Failures," 6 January 2010, Historian on the Warpath, scottmanning.com/content/joan-of-arc-military-successes-and-failures.

5. D. Todd Christofferson, "The Moral Force of Women," *Ensign*, November 2013.

6. Ephesians 6:2–3.

7. Russell M. Nelson, "A Plea to My Sisters," *Ensign*, November 2015.

8. Dallin H. Oaks, "Tithing," *Ensign*, May 1994.

9. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Come, Join with Us," *Ensign*, November 2013.

10. Julie B. Beck, "Mothers Who Know," *Ensign*, November 2007.

11. Nelson, "A Plea to My Sisters."

12. Christofferson, "The Moral Force of Women."

13. Christofferson, "The Moral Force of Women."