

# *Ready to Receive*

RUTH H. FUNK

President Oaks and you wonderful students and faculty, it is a great experience for me to be here with you today and with my dear husband and three of the four children that were mentioned in the introduction. This morning as I approached this beautiful campus, nestled at the base of these majestic mountains, and caught the grandeur of God's creations, myriads of warm, shiny experiences in and around this campus were recalled: There were weekends spent with a beloved aunt, Alice Louise Reynolds, a faculty member for many years. Our home in Salt Lake was her home. My room was her room. We shared so much—so much that she was determined to have a hand in selecting my husband. She didn't, but she highly approved of this wonderful man whom I sit by today and who received part of his college education under the mammoth trees of the lower campus. Although I graduated from the University of Utah, my favorite and most exciting dates were with BYU men at your fabulous socials, spiritual events, dances, picnics, and many exchange performances in which I was a participant. My mother was a graduate of Brigham Young Academy. Another aunt was the wife of one of your former Presidents, Benjamin Cluff. A daughter, Allyson, received her degree from

this University four years ago. A son, Judd, found his eternal companion, Elizabeth, in your A Capella Choir last year and took her to the house of the Lord just two months ago, and they're here today. Another daughter here today, Jenny Jo, hopes to enroll as a freshman and swell your ranks by one in the fall of 1975.

I salute many of your faculty who have helped shape and mold my thinking: Reed Bradford, Antone Romney, Virginia Cutler, Leon Hartshorn, Jim Barton, and others. I extend deepest appreciation to President Oaks for providing great teachers with whom we serve in the Aaronic Priesthood MIA. I feel deeply honored and grateful to occupy this spot, which is a mere speck in this awesome and glorious edifice, and pray that the Spirit of the Lord will allow us to communicate these next few minutes on our needs to be ready to receive.

## **The Challenge of Missionary Work**

The Lord must love us deeply and feel that we are ready to receive the inspiration,

*Ruth H. Funk was general president of the Young Women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 28 May 1974.*

confidence, and trust our beloved prophet extended to us at general conference as President Kimball literally opened the heavens and enlarged our vision and understanding. Many of the Brethren subsequently referred to the powerful address on missionary work given by President Kimball at the seminar of the Regional Representatives of the Twelve. At that time, using successive section and verse, he gave the Lord's directives relative to taking the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth and unto every creature that all might hear and receive his word. And we were admonished to teach all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. President Kimball brought to our attention promises, commandments, directions, and the absolute faith that the Lord can do all things and will make it possible for his kingdom to roll forth to bring to pass his work and his glory—the immortality and eternal life of man. Are we ready to receive such vision, such direction, such commandment, that this is the time and this is the generation who have been prepared for this period of divine design in God's timetable? I am persuaded that God prepares the way and quickens the souls of men that they are ready to receive his word if they keep his commandments and are sensitive to his promptings.

To President David O. McKay's admonition several years ago that every member be a missionary, a new dimension, a new understanding has been given. President Kimball spoke of men in ages past opening doors and getting into places that were impregnable because they did as the Lord told them. God continues to open doors. President Kimball reminded the Brethren that the Lehites got into the promised land, that the early Americans won a triumph in the Revolutionary War, that the children of Israel were set free and made an exodus out of Egypt. Then in reference to the doors to the nations of the world we must open to missionary work, he said:

*But I can see no good reason why the Lord would open doors that we are not prepared to enter. Why should he break down the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain or any other curtain if we are still unprepared to enter?*

*I believe we have men who could help the Apostles to open these doors—statesmen, able and trustworthy—but, when we are ready for them.* [Regional Representatives seminar, 4 April 1974]

President Kimball mentioned the fact that Brother David Kennedy would help specifically in this tremendous challenge and opportunity. Now, there is a perfect example of preparation. The Lord has given Brother Kennedy a training that few other man in the world will ever receive, and he has prepared him for this very delicate work of opening the doors of the nations to the gospel, which shall now go forth unto every nation. It will happen as we are ready to receive.

Again I quote from President Kimball:

*The question is frequently asked: Should every young man fill a mission? And the answer has been given by the Lord. It is "Yes." Every young man should fill a mission. He [the Lord] said:*

*"Send forth the elders of my Church unto the nations which are afar off; [He said elders. We have been talking about elders.] unto the islands of the sea; send forth unto foreign lands; call upon all nations—first upon the Gentiles, and then upon the Jews." (D&C 133:8.)*

*He did not limit it.*

*We now ordain young men at nineteen years of age to be elders. The answer is "yes." Every man should also pay his tithing. Every man should also observe the Sabbath. Every man should attend his meetings. Every man should consummate his marriage in the temple and properly train his children, and do many other mighty works. Of course he should. He does not always do it.*

*We realize that while all men definitely should, all men are not prepared to teach the gospel abroad.*

*Far too many young men arrive at missionary age quite unprepared to go on a mission, and of course they should not be sent. But they should all be prepared.* [Regional Representatives seminar, 4 April 1974]

And thereon hangs one of our greatest challenges—to keep these young boys worthy.

### **The Role of Women**

Perhaps this is where the women—the wives, the mothers, the girlfriends—fit in. They can prepare themselves to help create the atmosphere whereby these young men may develop and magnify their priesthood and realize their potential. One of BYU's most talented and loved writers, Carol Lynn Pearson, put this concept in such an eloquent language that I would like to quote one of her poems, called "On Nest Building":

*Mud is not bad for nest building.  
Mud and stick and a fallen feather or two will do  
And require no reaching.  
I could rest there with my little ones,  
Sound for the season at least.  
But if I may fly awhile,  
If I may cut through a sunset going out  
And a rainbow coming back—  
Color upon color sealed in my eyes—  
If I may have the unboundaried skies for my study,  
Clouds, cities, rivers for my rooms,  
If I may search the centuries for melody and  
    meaning,  
If I may try for the sun, I shall come back  
Bearing such beauties gleaned from God's and man's  
    very best,  
I shall come filled and then, oh the nest that I can  
    build.*

To you young women, while the emphasis is not so much on leaving home to fill a calling in the Church, still there is a great emphasis concerning this preparation period for *your* special mission.

As you meet the challenges of each day and seek divine direction, you will develop a relationship with your Father in heaven. You will become acquainted with the whisperings of the Spirit. You will grow spiritually during your preparation time. You will be in readiness to be received in due time, to be the eternal companion of whom God spoke when he said, "They twain shall become one." Father Adam and Mother Eve were the prototypes of every couple who ever hoped to attain exaltation. You will seek to follow their example and to see in their relationship a priesthood courtship. As you seek to understand priesthood, its power and purpose, you will acquire an understanding and testimony of the order and government of God's kingdom here on the earth. And as you further develop and become ready to enter into the house of the Lord with one of his servants, a returned missionary, you will be ready to have a priesthood courtship of your own—one where God is the third party.

With permission, may I read a letter from our new daughter-in-law, Elizabeth, whom I mentioned before. This was written in the Salt Lake Tabernacle just four months ago, following the beginning of their priesthood courtship. It reads:

*Dear Judd,*

*We are now just two minutes to broadcast time. There are a few more people here than usual because of Easter. This morning is so beautiful. I think that the morning is the most beautiful time of the whole day because it is new and full of hope—like a little resurrection every twenty-four hours.*

*Sitting here listening to this glorious music and thought-provoking words is a wonderful blessing, but there is another gift not everyone is aware of. This is the gift of atonement and resurrection. They are singing a chorale from the St. Matthew Passion. If only the whole world could hear it and understand its significance! We are like the rest of the world if we do not sink our roots deep into the earth. A tree without roots is called a prop. Its*

*leaves exist without purpose or growth. This kind of tree can look exactly like a growing tree, but its purpose is not for growing and producing. What I am saying is that, even though we laugh or joke or hold hands and smile, it is meaningless if we are without roots. Our roots have got to be so completely anchored that nothing can blow us over. These roots must be firmly anchored in Jesus Christ. We must receive that gift without pause and steadfastly. This relationship cannot exist or function unless we anchor it in this good earth of the gospel.*

*I love you for all I am when I am with you and for all you are even when I'm not around. Let's keep building as dynamically and enthusiastically as we can.*

*Remember that, even though you have a scar in the middle of your eyebrow, I love you a lot.*

E.C.

That is a beautiful love letter within the bonds of a priesthood courtship.

In your own preparation and in your own priesthood courtship, you will discover that like spirits attract. You will be in readiness to receive, in due time, the eternal companionship of which God spoke: "For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light" (D&C 88:40). What you prepare to be is what you will attract. As a young woman more fully begins to understand her relationship to the priesthood of God here on earth, she begins to comprehend the strength, the power, the protection, the direction, yes, and the ultimate opportunities of exaltation that can come to her only within this priesthood structure and in no other way.

### **Preparation During Youth**

I fondly reflect on games of my childhood such as "Kick the Can" and "Run, Sheepie, Run," when the captain or the starter would say, "Ready; set; go!" or "Ready; run." When it was time to come to find us, he would call,

"Ready or not, you shall be caught." Will we be ready when we shall be caught, when this mortal life is ended, when we have finished this second estate?

Last year, standing in the wings behind the curtain moments before a magnificently inspiring young artists' music festival, I witnessed a performance that touched my heart—maybe even more than the performance on stage, certainly as much. A prayer had been offered in behalf of each of the young performers that their hard weeks—yes, even years of conscientious preparation—might be drawn from at this moment to ensure a masterful performance. Eyes were moist; hearts were touched as the strength and unity of family members lent confidence and encouragement to each performer. At that moment, a father, appearing proud and grateful, quickly leaned forward, gave his beautiful young daughter a tender kiss on the cheek, and whispered, "You're ready, my dear." And her next step was on stage, alone—a solo flight.

Oh, that our preparation at each step in our lives might be such that, as we approach that hour of challenge (and there are many), we might have that quiet whispering of the Spirit in our ears: "You're ready, my dear." Readiness implies so much and demands much more. The requirements are discipline, teachableness, understanding, humility, faith, and practice. These are just a few of the ingredients. To receive means to own, to accept, to have it become a part of you. When it is yours, you can share it.

### **Obedient Servants of the Lord**

How generously the Lord has given us models and accounts of his chosen servants who have been ready to receive his commandments, his signs, and his direction. Noah was ready to receive the instructions for the ark that would carry him and all forms of life across the seas and perpetuate the human race and other forms of life. The brother of Jared was made

ready to receive his instructions to build the barges and then, through the Spirit of God, beheld the finger of the Lord: "And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger" (Ether 3:6). Daniel was made ready to receive interpretive powers that he might decipher and translate the words of prophecy in the royal court of Balshazzar, the king of Babylon, and was later protected when cast into the den of lions as God sent his angel to shut the lion's mouth.

How carefully the Lord prepared Abraham to be ready to receive one of the greatest tests of faith in holy writ! I weep and feel the greatest compassion when I read the account of his preparation for the sacrifice of his only son, Isaac, as written by Brother Melvin J. Ballard:

*I think as I read the story of Abraham's sacrifices of his son Isaac that our Father is trying to tell us what it cost him to give his Son as a gift to the world. You remember the story of how Abraham's son came after long years of waiting and was looked upon by his worthy sire, Abraham, as more precious than all his other possessions; yet, in the midst of his rejoicing, Abraham was told to take this only son and offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord. He responded. Can you feel what was in the heart of Abraham on that occasion? You love your son just as Abraham did [or will love a son as he did]; perhaps not quite so much, because of the peculiar circumstances, but what do you think was in his heart when he started away from Mother Sarah, and they bade her goodbye? What do you think was in his heart when he saw Isaac bidding farewell to his mother to take that three days' journey to the appointed place where the sacrifice was to be made? I imagine it was about all Father Abraham could do to keep from showing his great grief and sorrow at that parting, but he and his son trudged along three days toward the appointed place, Isaac carrying the fagots that were to consume the sacrifice. The two travelers rested, finally, at the mountainside, and the men*

*who had accompanied them were told to remain while Abraham and his son started up the hill.*

*The boy then said to his father: "Why, Father, we have the fagots; we have the fire to burn the sacrifice; but where is the sacrifice?"*

*It must have pierced the heart of Father Abraham to hear the trusting and confiding son say: "You have forgotten the sacrifice." Looking at the youth, his son of promise, the poor father could only say: "The Lord will provide."*

*They ascended the mountain, gathered the stones together, and placed the fagots upon them. Then Isaac was bound, hand and foot, kneeling upon the altar. I presume Abraham, like a true father, must have given his son his farewell kiss, his blessing, his love, and his soul must have been drawn out in that hour of agony toward his son who was to die by the hand of his own father. Every step proceeded until the cold steel was drawn, and the hand raised that was to strike the blow to let out the life's blood when the angel of the Lord said: "It is enough." [Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1949), pp. 152–53]*

The love, the pain, the faith and compassion we feel, perhaps bring us one small step closer to understanding the sacrifice of our Father in heaven in giving his Only Begotten Son as a ransom that we might have eternal life. Abraham was ready to receive this ultimate test from God.

King Benjamin's exhortation to his sons as he prepared them and made Mosiah ready to receive the keys and powers of the kingdom is another vivid example of a people made ready to hear the word of the Lord. You will remember Mosiah was directed to make a proclamation that all should gather themselves together to go up to the temple to hear the words of the Lord:

*And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, . . . from the*

*eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another.*

*And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which King Benjamin should speak unto them. [Mosiah 2:5–6]*

Families prepared and ready to receive instruction today from a prophet of the Lord in a comparable way, we come together twice a year to see and hear God’s chosen servants. Saints in the United States and Canada, Central and South America, Mexico, Australia, countries in Europe—including Great Britain, Austria, France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands—Hawaii, and the United States Armed Forces in the Pacific heard our prophet speak this spring. In 890 buildings 190,000 priesthood bearers were instructed in their duties at the general priesthood meeting. Through electronic media the Lord has provided a way that all may hear.

We all know the miracle of preparing a land where the gospel could be restored in such a climate that Joseph Smith was ready to receive divine revelation. As a boy, he saw Satan’s buffeting, and surely this is a method of preparing us to be steadfast in the gospel. He was visited by angels and was made to wait and learn patience and be prepared to receive the gospel in its fullness. Joseph Smith, just as all of the prophets of God were, was foreordained and made ready to come to this earth at this time and was appointed by God to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ here on earth. In section 35 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in response to an inquiry of Sidney Rigdon, the Lord said, “And there are none that doeth good except those who are ready to receive the fulness of my gospel, which I have sent forth unto this generation” (D&C 35:12). This means you, me, all of God’s children. This generation may receive the fullness of the Lord’s gospel when

we are ready to receive it. What greater promise could we be given?

We have thus far spoken of men who were made ready to receive direct revelation from the Lord and to become instruments in his hands in furthering his work. Great among such children of God was Mary, a woman, the mother of Jesus. What greater privilege and calling could come than that of being made ready to become the mother of the Son of God? We know she was prepared to be the mother of Jesus for centuries before this event took place, as recorded in the writings of King Benjamin, Nephi, and Isaiah, who prophesied, “A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

We know little about Mary’s early life—only that she was living in Nazareth and espoused to Joseph, which was the custom that was often followed by a girl early in her life. She must have been very young when the angel Gabriel appeared to her, and after addressing her as “blessed among women,” he said, “Thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:30–32). Imagine the impact of this announcement from a heavenly messenger to one young girl, probably younger than any girl in this building! But after the angel had explained how this would take place and told her about the son of Elizabeth, John the Baptist, who would be born to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ, the angel said, “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

Mary’s response was “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). Oh, that each of us could have such unquestioning faith, such commitment, such absolute trust in the Lord, and be so prepared that we could say to anything he asked of us, “Be it unto me according to thy word.”

Inspired by this passage, one of your own faculty members, Eloise Bell, along with another beautiful woman, Dorothy Neilson—both of the Aaronic Priesthood MIA general board—wrote the following verses:

*Behold thy handmaiden, Lord.  
Ready now am I,  
To live thy word, to teach thy word,  
To praise thy name on high.*

*Behold my hands, O Lord,  
Consecrated to thee,  
To serve thy daughters, to serve thy sons,  
To comfort each one tenderly.*

*Behold mine eyes, O Lord,  
Windows to my soul,  
To see thy light, to love thy light,  
To know and shape my role.*

*Behold the handmaiden of the Lord;  
Be it unto me according to thy word.  
As Mary spoke, so speak I.  
Heavenly Father, I will try  
To do thy will,  
Thy laws fulfill,  
In service to magnify thee,  
In humility to seek thee,  
Always to speak of thee,  
And thine,  
As mine.  
Behold thy handmaiden.*

*Behold my heart, O Lord,  
Waiting here before thee,  
To feel thy love, to share thy love;  
Ever thy child I will be.*

Of course, the celestial example of preparation and readiness is that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was prepared in the preexistence to receive the greatest of all assignments from our Heavenly Father—to sacrifice his life that we might all live eternally.

Speaking of the life of our late prophet Harold B. Lee, President Spencer W. Kimball described him as “a high peak in a mighty range of impregnable mountains” (“Guidelines to Carry Forth the Work of God in Cleanliness,” *Ensign* 4 [May 1974]: 4). He was prepared by the Lord to be the prophet of the Church and the mighty architect of correlation, through which process the Lord will work in preparing us for the second coming of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Through President Lee, the Lord called me to my position. I love him. I will ever revere him throughout all eternity. My constant prayer is that I will be an adequate instrument in the Lord’s hands and merit his trust and confidence.

Our beloved President Kimball is as great an example as any of the prophets of old. He was foreordained, prepared, preserved, tested, challenged, refined, and made ready to be our prophet today—our prophet, seer, and revelator. One senses the power, vision, and sense of urgency he has in extending the blessings of the gospel to all mankind. He was prepared and made ready even before the foundations of the earth. He was one of the noble and great ones whom Abraham saw. You, as baptized members of the Church, were there, too. You were prepared to come forth in this day and age to partake of and share in the gospel.

### **The Purpose of Life on Earth**

The delightful musical *Saturday’s Warrior* that I enjoyed at your Mormon Arts Festival told a profound story. The characters were living in the preexistence with one another—children of our Heavenly Father, a family of brothers and sisters with gifts and talents and wants and challenges and all the things that children have as potential grownups. Father may have said to us one day, “Are you ready now? I’m going to send you down to earth to prove you, to give you a mortal body, that you

may prove you are worthy for me to prepare you for life eternal." Isn't it a comforting knowledge to know we kept our first estate? If we did so once, maybe we can do it a second time.

We came down and forgot all, but the Lord did not leave us without assistance. He sent the gospel among us and bestowed upon his sons the holy priesthood, which is the power to act in his name. He even made provision that his sons could be prepared for this holy priesthood by giving the younger men the Aaronic Priesthood. Our beloved Bishop Victor L. Brown is the president of this Aaronic Priesthood today. God has told us that this is the preparatory priesthood. He does not expect a man to be ordained into the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood without being prepared, not only spiritually, but also mentally, socially, and temporally. Part of and nestled in the arms of this wonderful preparatory priesthood is the MIA function. Therein you will find great programs for the development and preparation of young men and young women to fulfill their destinies as the promised children of God: men for the governorship of worlds, women for the motherhood of nations. Each one of us, then, is preparing just by virtue of the fact that we live. Each one of us is preparing for good or evil, and that which we prepare for we will receive.

Each one of us has a specific destiny, which God intends we shall receive according to our faithfulness. He has a place for each of us and prepares us each day to receive it if we are worthy. Everything in our lives is there for a purpose, and that purpose is to prepare us. Preparation precedeth all readiness. Are we ready to receive the sacrament, the companionship of the Holy Ghost, a comprehension of the Lord's atoning sacrifice? Our Father in heaven is anxious to open the windows of heaven to us just as soon as we are prepared and ready.

I am reminded of Enos, a young man thoroughly taught in the words of God by his father. One day when Enos went into the forest to hunt, which we understand was not

uncommon, something very uncommon happened. Enos was different when he returned. There had been a turning point in his life. He was not the same. Enos spoke concerning this experience in these words: "And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens" (Enos 4). Enos heard the voice of the Lord and he had a spiritual experience that made a difference because he was ready. He was prepared. That day when he went to hunt beasts in the forest, the words which he had so often heard his father speak, we are told, sank deep into his heart and he received a remission of his sins and became spiritually in tune.

My dear young friends, may I challenge you this day to prepare yourselves to be in readiness and to ask the Lord, as did Enos, for a remission of your sins. This very day, some of you might go into your forests, so to speak. As your souls hunger for a readiness to receive, it is my testimony, through his Spirit, that he will speak to you concerning the yearnings of your heart. Be ye ready to receive, and the Lord will pour down his blessings upon you, making it possible for you to realize your divine destiny.

I know that God lives. I know that his son is Jesus the Christ, our Redeemer. I know that a prophet speaks for the Lord today. I love my Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I have every confidence in all this world that you are a choice generation, saved and prepared and here because of what you did in the preexistence. I pray with all my heart that we will understand the great power of the priesthood, that girls will understand their roles, that boys will magnify their priesthood, that we women may stand at the side of you men and together receive the celestial blessings that I know are in store for us. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.