

# *Building Up the Kingdom of God*

PATRICIA P. PINEGAR

I am honored to be with you tonight. Because I am a mother and grandmother of young people your age, I feel qualified to bring you a message from your mothers and grandmothers. I want you to know how much you are loved. We love you more than life itself, more than you will understand until you have children of your own. And, oh my, do we worry about you and want you to be happy! You've probably noticed that it is usually very difficult for us to refrain from telling you exactly what you need to do to be happy. But that's only because we love you and have been around a little longer than you have. This is a crazy world, and we have had some experience with the pitfalls and don't want you to be hurt.

Mothers are also quite visionary and can sense your potential. Sometimes you may think we get a little pushy in helping you reach that potential. Tonight, if I get a little pushy, just smile and think, "She's just like my mother—that means she loves me, she cares."

You are an incredible group of Saints! a fantastic army of goodness. You have so much going for you. You are youthful, strong, and filled with energy. You have good minds; you can actually remember things! Dr. Seuss describes some of your assets in his book *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

*Congratulations!*

*Today is your day.*

*You're off to Great Places!*

*You're off and away!*

*You have brains in your head.*

*You have feet in your shoes.*

*You can steer yourself*

*any direction you choose.*

[*Oh, the Places You'll Go!* (New York: Random House, 1990), pp. 1–2]

He's talking about agency—the ability and freedom to choose your direction. Agency is an incredible gift from Heavenly Father. To help you with your choices, He has given you so much more than brains and feet. He has given you the truth through the Holy Ghost. You know who you are, where you came from, and where you are going. That knowledge should help you make wise choices.

In *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, President Spencer W. Kimball wrote more seriously about your choices:

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*Patricia P. Pinegar was the Primary general president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at BYU on 7 March 1999.*

*Life gives to all the choice. You can satisfy yourself with mediocrity if you wish. You can be common, ordinary, dull, colorless; or you can channel your life so that it will be clean, vibrant, progressive, useful, colorful, rich. You can soil your record, defile your soul, trample underfoot virtue, honor, and goodness, and thus forfeit an exaltation in the kingdom of God. Or you can be righteous, commanding the respect and admiration of your associates in all walks of life, and enjoying the love of the Lord. Your destiny is in your hands and your all-important decisions are your own to make. [The Miracle of Forgiveness (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), p. 235]*

Tonight I would like to put an idea in your mind and in your heart—a direction you might consider, a choice you might make. I really do want to push you toward your potential. This idea is not something I thought about when I was your age, but you are so much better than I was, and the Church needs you so desperately.

In Matthew 6:33 we read: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Footnote *a* to that verse in the LDS scriptures takes us to the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 6:38, where the Lord, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, expands our vision: “But seek ye first *to build up* the kingdom of God, *and to establish* his righteousness” (italics in original).

Tonight I would ask you to consider what you can do to build up the kingdom of God, to be disciples of Christ, to be of service, to be helpful in the kingdom, right now! I want to share some thoughts and ideas about the wondrous opportunity and sacred responsibility of being kingdom builders, and then suggest some specific ways you can build the kingdom of God.

What exactly is the kingdom of God on earth? It is His Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is you and me, an organized group of people who have been

baptized and have taken upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and who are led by a living prophet who speaks for God. We’re talking about building up His Church. We’re talking about building up each other.

What type of person does the Lord need to help build His kingdom on earth? President Spencer W. Kimball taught us the nature of kingdom builders:

*The Savior could have taken highly trained minds from the temple porches for the chief builders of his kingdom, but he went to the seashore to get humble fishermen. He wanted men who . . . were trusting and sincere and willing to serve. [TSWK, p. 65]*

You are that kind of men and women. The Lord does not require that you have exceptional gifts or abilities. He asks that you be humble, trusting, sincere, and willing to serve. Then He can guide you to do important work in His kingdom. He is depending on you.

At times, when we are asked or expected to do something new or difficult, we feel inadequate. We say things such as, “I can’t do that. That’s too difficult. They’ve called the wrong person. I’m not qualified.” Those negative feelings can become overwhelming and actually hinder our ability to serve. But those feelings of inadequacy can also humble us and turn us to the Lord. With His help we can accomplish many good things. To those who are willing but feel inadequate, President Spencer W. Kimball would say:

*We are glad you feel inadequate. That means you will be humble and do all in your power to make yourself able. You will call upon the Lord, the source of power and strength. [TSWK, p. 477]*

Early one evening a little over four years ago, we were having dinner when the phone rang. When I answered it, I heard, “This is President Monson’s secretary. May I speak to Sister Pinegar?” Oh, my heart! She asked if we

could set up an appointment when Brother Pinegar and I could meet with President Thomas S. Monson. The days preceding the appointment were spent in the agony of anticipation, in retrospection, and in feeling totally inadequate regardless of what I was going to be called to do. When the day finally arrived, President Monson was kind and gracious. He called me to serve as the Primary general president. He instructed me in my new responsibility and calmed my soul when he reminded me that “whom God calls, God qualifies.”

Being involved in building the kingdom will require us to move out of our comfort zone. One of the great purposes of earth life is to help us change and become more Christlike. That requires us to stretch and grow. The scriptures remind us that our weaknesses can become strengths when we humble ourselves and have faith:

*And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. [Ether 12:27]*

Why should you be a kingdom builder? Is it really your responsibility? Why is it important to do right now, when you are so involved in getting an education, earning enough to make ends meet, trying to make it on your own, starting your family, building up your own kingdom? You should be a builder of the kingdom right now because you are desperately needed. And did you know you have promised to help?

When I was a little girl my mother told me, “Whenever you make a promise, consider well its importance; then when made, engrave it upon your heart.” You have covenanted to help. Your baptism is a testimony of your covenant to serve Him, to help build up the

kingdom of God. In Mosiah 18:13 we read Alma’s words to Helam as he baptized him at the Waters of Mormon:

*And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said: Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body.*

Do you remember the day you entered into that covenant to serve Him? I was a conscientious eight-year-old. I wanted to keep the commandments. I wanted to feel my Savior’s approval. I remember that after I was baptized my father took me to a store, gave me a dollar, and told me to pick out something that would remind me of my baptism. I found five small pictures of the Savior and hung them in my room. I looked at them often and felt that He really did care about me. I wanted to please Him, but I wasn’t sure that I knew what all of the commandments were, and I worried that maybe I was not keeping all of them. Though my understanding of the covenant I made at baptism has increased over the years, as I partake of the sacrament each week and renew my covenants, I continue to feel His love for me, and I still want to please Him and feel His approval. One thing I know for certain: I am happy when I’m involved in His work.

Why should you be a kingdom builder? Because you need to feel that happiness and joy. Brigham Young said:

*For there is no real peace, there is no real happiness in anything in heaven or on the earth, except to those who serve the Lord. In His service there is joy, there is happiness; but they are not to be found anywhere else. [JD 5:1]*

That joy and happiness is worth working for.

Why should you be a kingdom builder? Because being a kingdom builder is a

wondrous opportunity. Is it not wondrous to think that He needs you, that He, who is the Creator, the Exemplar, the Redeemer, asks for your help? I believe, because we are the spirit children of God the Father, because we have taken upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, because we have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, within our souls there is a yearning to serve, to be kingdom builders. Have you ever felt a despondency, a boredom, a depression, a feeling of worthlessness when you are not meaningfully involved in helping with the work of the kingdom? Missionaries returning from full-time service often have those feelings. Those feelings are a call to get more involved in building the kingdom. We are His children; we need to help.

How should we help build the kingdom? The scriptures remind us that we will not be commanded in all things, but that we

*should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;*

*For the power is in [us], wherein [we] are agents unto [ourselves]. [D&C 58:27–28]*

That power within us is the Holy Ghost, and He can lead us to do good even as Nephi was led, “not knowing beforehand the things which [we] should do” (1 Nephi 4:6).

The Holy Ghost will prompt us as we learn to open our ears and hearts to hear and understand the word of the Lord through the scriptures and the living prophets. King Benjamin encouraged his people to not trifle with the words he would speak to them. He said, “Hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand” (Mosiah 2:9). After we have heard the word of the Lord we must be able to move forward, to make a plan, organize, and be committed. In the Doctrine and Covenants, we are reminded to “organize [ourselves]; prepare every needful thing” (D&C 88:119).

Let me share with you some simple ideas that can help direct your efforts to build the kingdom and “bring to pass much righteousness” (D&C 58:27). Start by recognizing your divine potential. You are an integral part of God’s kingdom. You are a son or daughter of God with great things to do here on earth. The scriptures teach:

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. [Romans 8:16–17]*

What a glorious revelation! Be pleased with who you are. You are good in so many ways.

As a child of God, you have the ability to improve and progress throughout your life. Open your heart and feel the desire to become even a little better than you now are. Make a plan. Choose one thing you need to improve in. Maybe it’s communicating with Heavenly Father more frequently in heartfelt prayer. Maybe it’s being more honest with yourself and others. Maybe it’s going to your bishop and beginning the process of repentance. Next, talk to Heavenly Father in pleading prayer; ask Him to help you be strong and have the integrity and commitment to carry out your plan.

So many of you are great examples of standing up for what you believe. You have made plans, you know where you are going, and you are great examples of commitment and integrity. A young woman, while attending her first year at BYU, didn’t date a great deal. The second year, she met a young man. She liked him a lot; they had so much fun together. Then she discovered he was not living some of the standards of the Church. She was so disappointed. She felt deceived. The scriptures caution, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous” (1 John 3:7).

After denial and many heart-wrenching discussions with this young man, she said

good-bye. It was so difficult to do. That young woman was filled with integrity. She knew who she was and what she wanted in her life, her eternal life. She had a plan and was committed, and she was guided by the Holy Ghost. Hopefully, those tender discussions helped that young man turn his life around.

Building and strengthening each other is another important way you can be involved in building the kingdom. That is something you can do so well. What does the word of God say about strengthening each other? Listen:

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. [John 13:34]*

*He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

*But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. [1 John 2:10–11]*

*When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. [Luke 22:32]*

*Strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings. [D&C 108:7]*

Open your hearts and let the Holy Ghost fill you with the desire to bless each other, your family, your roommates, your friends. Do something each day that will bring them joy; maybe just a smile would do it.

The giant redwood trees in northern California give us a powerful image of how we can strengthen each other. These gigantic trees have very shallow root systems. But when they are surrounded by other redwood trees, the strongest, fiercest wind cannot blow them over. The roots of the giant redwood trees intertwine and strengthen each other, and when a storm comes, they actually hold each other up.

There are many ways we can hold each other up. First and foremost, we must always be an example by being true to the faith. We heard this wonderful choir sing:

*Shall the youth of Zion falter  
In defending truth and right?  
While the enemy assaileth,  
Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No!*

Why? Because:

*To God's command,  
Soul, heart, and hand,  
Faithful and true we will ever stand.  
["True to the Faith," Hymns, 1985, no. 254]*

I believe in you. The youth of the Church are stronger and more faithful than they have ever been. Our prophet believes in you. In a letter from the First Presidency that is to be delivered by home teachers to every home in the Church, it says:

*We compliment most warmly those of our young people who choose to follow the way of the Lord and the program of the Church. We are pleased to note that faith is increasing among our youth, for which we are deeply grateful. ["A Letter to Church Members," Church News, 27 February 1999, p. 3]*

Your faithful example is a powerful way to build the kingdom; but at times, you must do even more than be an example. You must be as the watchmen on the tower and lovingly, but firmly, stand for the truth by warning your friends.

I grew up in Hawaii. I loved to swim in the ocean, to catch the waves, to bodysurf. Lest you think I was a pro, I was only about ten years old. Sometimes, as I looked out at an incoming wave, I would catch a glimpse of a beautiful bubble floating on top of the water. I would do anything in my power to move away from that bubble. The bubble was

beautiful, alluring, and very deceptive. It was a Portuguese man-of-war, a small jellyfish. I knew the consequences of coming in contact with that bubble, with its long, almost invisible threads stretching out into the water below. The sting was terrible. It felt like dozens of bee stings as the strands brushed against your skin or wrapped around you.

At times, when we arrived at the beach, there would be a caring adult or another child who would warn us of the danger: “Don’t go in the water. There are a lot of Portuguese man-of-wars today.” If we were wise, we would listen and not go in the water. If we were not so wise, we would at least be alert and watchful. I was always very grateful to have someone warn me and prepare me for the danger.

I pray that you will build the kingdom by caring for the souls of your friends. I hope that not one of them would have to say, “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul” (Psalm 142:4). Make a plan to stand for truth and righteousness by warning your friends of danger and then showing

*an increase of love . . . , lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;*

*That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death. [D&C 121:43–44]*

The faithful people at the Waters of Mormon clapped their hands for joy as Alma taught them that when they were baptized, they must be

*willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;*

*Yea, and . . . willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of*

*the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life. [Mosiah 18:8–9]*

You also have those sacred responsibilities to help and bless other people. And the same blessings can be yours—and that is worth clapping your hands for.

The Savior is our perfect example of building and strengthening others. In a message to us, the First Presidency talked about Jesus’ service:

*Out of the abundance of His heart, He spoke to the poor, the downtrodden, the widows, the little children. He blessed the lame, the blind, the deaf. He taught lessons of love and repeatedly demonstrated unselfish service to others.*

*In like manner, members of the Church are called upon to change our hearts, to make our outward actions conform to what we say we believe. We are asked to be kinder with one another, more gentle and forgiving. We are asked to be slower to anger and more prompt to help. We are asked to extend the hand of friendship and resist the hand of retribution. We are called upon to be true disciples of Christ, to love one another with genuine compassion, for that is the way Christ loved us. [“An Easter Greeting from the First Presidency,” Church News, 15 April 1995, p. 1]*

As baptized members of the kingdom of God, we are to stand as witnesses of God, even until death. Missionary work is another way you are needed as a kingdom builder. Our prophet, who speaks for God, pleads for our help in building the kingdom. President Gordon B. Hinckley has asked all able young men to be worthy, to prepare, and to serve as missionaries. Young men, listen, can you hear the word of the Lord through our prophet?

*You have missions to perform. Each of you should plan for missionary service. You may have some doubts. You may have some fears. Face your doubts and your fears with faith. Prepare yourselves*

*to go. You have not only the opportunity; you have the responsibility. The Lord has blessed and favored you in a remarkable and wonderful way. Is it too much to ask that you give two years totally immersed in His service? ["Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service," Ensign, November 1997, p. 52]*

Open your heart so the Spirit can help you have a desire to serve. Brother Pinegar and I are looking forward to serving another mission. But it takes courage to serve. Here is a scripture that helps me: "That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers" (D&C 1:23).

You and I can do this because God will help us. Don't be afraid. Remember, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Young women, you can choose whether to serve a full-time mission. Our granddaughter Brooke, who is serving in the Washington Tacoma Mission, writes:

*I love to serve the Lord. I love this work. I am so grateful for the strength of our Heavenly Father. I couldn't do any of this without Him. I love the Lord. I am so grateful for this time in my life. I will reflect back on it forever.*

Make a plan to be a missionary throughout your life. Our grandson Ed has a plan. He is preparing for his mission by taking several institute classes. He is studying the scriptures and is so excited about the things he is learning. When he opened his missionary call, he was visibly touched as he read:

*Dear Elder Pinegar:*

*You are hereby called to serve as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You are assigned to labor in the Philippines Cebu Mission.*

Those of you who have returned from missions: continue to build the kingdom, continue to maintain the standards that helped you qualify for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Now, may I tell you that the most hallowed, sacred service you can ever give as a kingdom builder is the work you will do to strengthen your family and your future family? Open your ears to hear the pleadings of our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley:

*Perhaps our greatest concern is with families. The family is falling apart all over the world. . . .*

*I lift a warning voice to our people. We have moved too far toward the mainstream of society in this matter. Now, of course there are good families. There are good families everywhere. But there are too many who are in trouble. This is a malady with a cure. The prescription is simple and wonderfully effective. It is love. It is plain, simple, everyday love and respect. It is a tender plant that needs nurturing. But it is worth all of the effort we can put into it. ["Look to the Future," Ensign, November 1997, p. 69]*

Open your heart and let the Spirit work a desire in you to help in strengthening families. If you are single and away from home or still living at home, there is much you can do as an adult child to love, respect, and strengthen your parents and siblings.

A young woman's heart was touched as her institute teacher taught about Lehi giving blessings to his children. He encouraged the students to ask for a father's blessing. After the class, she asked the teacher if he would give her a blessing because she was sure her father was not prepared to do so. The teacher encouraged her to write to her father and ask him if he would give her a blessing when she was home for the holidays. When she returned to school, she reported with joy that her father had made a mighty change. He was reading the scriptures and attending church again. The

blessing he gave her was beautiful. The entire family was blessed and strengthened.

Make a plan to strengthen your family. Remember, President Hinckley said love and respect are the keys. What about your future family? I believe we can again hear the word of the Lord as we listen to our prophet:

*No other generation in all of history has offered women so many opportunities. Your first objective should be a happy marriage, sealed in the temple of the Lord, and followed by the rearing of a good family. ["Stand True and Faithful," Ensign, May 1996, p. 92]*

And to the young men of the Church:

*You have a tremendous obligation toward the girl you marry. Perhaps you are not thinking much of that now. But the time isn't far away when you will think of it, and now is the time to prepare for that most important day of your lives when you take unto yourself a wife and companion equal with you before the Lord.*

*That obligation begins with absolute loyalty. . . . She will be yours and yours alone, regardless of the circumstances of your lives. You will be hers and hers alone. There can be eyes for none other. There must be absolute loyalty, undeviating loyalty one to another. ["Living Worthy of the Girl You Will Someday Marry," Ensign, May 1998, p. 49]*

I hope marriage is the desire of your hearts. It is the noblest of desires. Many of you young men and women are in the perfect season for marriage. Don't be afraid, and don't linger too long on decisions to do good things, to do what Father in Heaven wants and needs you to do. Move forward with joy and confidence. Don't be afraid of sacrifice and struggle. Make a plan and prepare. Living worthy to be sealed in the temple should be number one on the plan. Dating should probably be number two—get busy young men! And when the Spirit lets both of you know that marriage is right, then begin

planning together. Study "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" together. You might want to discuss any questions with your bishop. That inspired document will open your ears and heart to important truths regarding the sacred nature of your future eternal family and specific guidelines to help you have a happy family. Talk about your future children.

President Hinckley said, "How precious a thing is a baby. How wonderful a thing is a child. What a marvelous thing is a family" ("Living Worthy," *Ensign*, May 1998, p. 51).

I bear my witness that his words are true. There is nothing on this earth that equals the wonder and awe that you will feel as you hold each of your newborn children. Stay pure and clean for them. I talked to a young woman and asked her what she did when she faced a difficult choice or was tempted to do something wrong. She said, "I think of my future children. They are my cheerleaders."

I recently was able to do one of my most favorite things: hold a new grandchild. I love it because that is something I know how to do, and I do it so well. I visited our youngest child, Tricia, her husband, Jeff, and their first child, Emily. It was so exciting to see this new mother and father discover the wonder of their creation. It never ceases to amaze me that it takes four years of schooling to be able to teach children in elementary school, eight years to put your fingers in someone's mouth to fill a tooth, but to be a mother or a father—the most important responsibility you will ever have in this earth life and in the eternities—it takes nine months, with no classes. Make a plan for your future family.

I made a plan. I decided that when I had children and put them to bed at night, my children would stay in their beds and not continually get up; and that is exactly what happened. What a pathetic plan. I hope you will make a better plan than I did. Decide what you will teach your children and how you will love



them. Then commit to your plan with all of your heart, might, mind, and soul.

There are many ways for you to be a kingdom builder. Is it necessary to have a calling to build the kingdom? No. Is it necessary to accept callings and do your best? Yes. Is it necessary to be anxiously engaged in a good cause and bring about righteousness? Yes. You truly are needed; what an army of goodness you are. It is a wondrous opportunity and a sacred responsibility to build up the kingdom of God on earth, to be kingdom builders—right now.

You will not be commanded in all things, but the Holy Ghost will direct your paths if you listen to His promptings. He will help you

discover what you can do to build the kingdom as you open your ears to hear the word of God and open your heart to understand and feel the desire to help. Tonight before you go to bed, decide on something you can do to build the kingdom. Make a plan and do it.

I pray Father in Heaven will bless you with confidence in His love, that your heart will be filled with gratitude for His great plan of happiness, and that you will move forward making choices that will please Him. I pray you will consider what you can do to build the kingdom of God on earth, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.