

If We Want to Go Up, We Have to Get On

By Elaine Cannon

Young Women General President

President Kimball, brethren of the General Authorities who are here with us, thank you for this privilege and for your presence. And to you sisters across the waves of sound, our greetings and our love. To all of you radiant mothers and daughters gathered here in the Tabernacle (including my own daughters and my mother who have come from their scattered homes to be in the presence of the prophet on this historic occasion). You are a wonderful delight to look upon.

I join with you all in the joy of being a woman, and in the privilege of being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the fulness of times. For those of you who haven't joined the Church yet, we welcome you when it's right for you to come. Some of us have just come from a very special reception which the Young Women hosted in our building across the way. We honored lovely Sister Camilia Kimball and Sister Tanner and other wives of the General Authorities and their daughters. We paid particular tribute to Sister Funk and her counselors who have just been released as the general presidency of the Young Women. We deeply respect and affectionately appreciate all of these sisters. We commend them to you as models for your own lives. They live close to the Lord. They follow the Prophet implicitly. They contribute to society meaningfully, and in turn they have endured difficult circumstances which bring beauty into life. We include other women seated here before you—Sister Louise Lake, Sister Belle Spafford—among this distinguished group of women whom we all would do well to emulate.

Now tonight, clear across the world for the first time, the Church women over twelve are meeting. We are tied together by technology but sense each other's spirit through that tender influence of the Lord Jesus Christ. We mark this moment as the beginning—at last—of a unique unification of all the sisters of the Church, and we are focusing on proper priorities instead of personal preferences or even programs. We see it as a significant enveloping of all of us under the mantle of the mouthpiece of the Lord, President Spencer W. Kimball. Now, as he speaks to us tonight, it is as if the Lord Jesus Christ himself were addressing us sisters. Christ made this very clear when he said to others of his children a time ago, "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these ... whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you" (3 Ne. 12:1).

"And whatsoever they shall speak ... shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

"Behold, this is the promise of the Lord." (D&C 68:4–5.) So, President Kimball, with all of our hearts we sisters of the Church sustain you, and we shall try to heed your words.

I'm going to share an experience I had with President Kimball to help you understand what a choice human being he is, besides a powerful prophet, and perhaps base the rest of my remarks on this incident. I stood alone in the basement of the Church Office Building about

two years ago, waiting for an elevator. It was very early on a Monday morning, well before the influx of office workers. As the elevator lowered into place, suddenly two Church security officers appeared from out of somewhere and held back the opening doors. Now, nobody does that for me, so I looked around just in time to see President Kimball and his personal secretary, Brother Haycock, entering the area. They moved quickly into the secured area, and I quickly moved out of the way. Well, as President Kimball turned and faced the front of the elevator, he saw me standing out there waiting for the next one. And he said to me very graciously, "Good morning." And I said, "Good morning, President Kimball." And he said, "Aren't you going to get on?" And I said, "Well—" and hesitated for a few moments—"I didn't think I was supposed to under the circumstances." And then he said, "Aren't you going up?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, tell me, how do you intend to get there?" And then he said, "Come along." So I got on! At the prophet's invitation I was happy to ride up with him.

Tonight President Kimball extends an invitation, with some specifics, I am sure, for all of us as women to follow him as he follows the Savior. If we want to "go up," we must "get on." It is that simple. He is our leader, in all the world of would-be leaders, who can guide us back to the presence of God.

Sisters, this church is the saving remnant of the world. And what is our part as women in all of this? The girl is the future mother of the man. The woman is companion to the priesthood. She is molder of the next generation. As women ours is the gift to love, to influence for good, to marry, and to mother—but according to the timetable of the Lord for us. (So hang in there, sisters. If it hasn't happened yet, it may a little later than sooner. And when the time comes, if you have lived for it, have no regrets that you prayed so fervently for a good man who now is always off to a meeting or filling some celestial assignment, depending upon the timing.) You see, the details of your life and the timing really aren't all that important. They just point up differences to us—married or single, living alone, barren or bulging with blessings. These are just details. What does matter is our personal relationship with the Lord and our own unshakable testimony that he cares enough about each one of us to be there when we really need him.

Though we are women with different cultural backgrounds clear across the span of my voice, some with varying differences in personal situations (we may even clash at times on opinions regarding temporal trends or how to bake a loaf of bread properly), my firm feeling is that we must pursue a course of a covenant people. We must secure those traditions which are sacred to good people everywhere. In each country as you hear this program by direct line, your course should become clear, your priorities ought to be known to you as a daughter of God. Personal opinions may vary. Eternal principles never do. When the prophet speaks, sisters, the debate is over. So I urge us all to provide powerful unity as women for those things we can agree upon—family, chastity, accountability to the Lord, responsibility in the community, sharing the gospel. To help us, it seems there are at least two critical areas to concentrate on—for all of us of all ages, whether we are whole or lame, at peace or troubled, privileged or seemingly deprived. The first is to strengthen self. The second is to serve the Lord by serving others. This is the way it works: We gain a personal testimony. We share it with others. We learn the principles of the gospel. We apply them as we associate with others. We keep a personal record, and we do our genealogy. And, sisters, we emphatically and happily declare, "I will be obedient! I will help strengthen others that they may be so too!"

In Christ's day, people were pressing heavily about him on one occasion. A woman in trouble reached out to touch him in faith. His disciples scoffed that Christ should question who had

touched him when so many were crowding about, and yet, he knew her touch was different. She had connected. He responded by healing her.

Sisters, our touch must be different. Rather than merely moving about Christ, wanly waiting for his blessings, we must reach out and connect—in faith. The prophet is here today to show us how. As he quietly taught me that early morning, if we want to go up, we have to get on.

If by any chance there are doubts in any hearts within the sound of my voice, or if your own testimony is at all shakey at the moment, hang on to ours while yours grows. I know that God lives, and I know that Jesus is the Christ and a necessary Redeemer, that he loves us and that his principles suffice. On this very special occasion of my maiden voyage, as it were, I am thankful to be able to personally testify that as President Kimball placed his hands upon my head with the other Brethren, President Tanner and President Romney, to set me apart as the general president of the Young Women of the Church, I felt, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that sweet and undeniable witness of the validity of his calling as prophet. This church is true, sisters. The system—priesthood, womanhood—is a blessing to us.

As each challenge comes to us in life, and as our timetable varies a little from what we thought it was going to be, may we be wise enough to find ourselves on the Lord's side, getting on and going up with the prophet, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.