

Episode 9

Stories from General Young Women Meetings

STANDING AS A WITNESS

NARRATOR: ‘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..." ask the young women of the church and they'll tell you that's from the young women's theme. On this episode of "Stories from General Young Women Meetings" we'll be sharing stories of young women who were examples of "standing as witnesses of god." President James E. Faust starts by sharing an historical account about Joan of Arc... an example of one who stood for what she believed in. This is from the 2006 General Young Women Meeting.

(President James E. Faust, April 2006, General Young Women Meeting)

A few years ago I stood on the spot where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431. Young Joan of Arc, one of the great heroines in history, became the unlikely standard-bearer for the French army in the Dark Ages, long before the gospel was restored. Joan had the Light of Christ and also the courage to follow its promptings and make a difference. Joan was a peasant girl who could neither read nor write, but she was bright. Long years of war with the English had impoverished and divided her country. At 17, sensing her life had a purpose, she left home, determined to help liberate her oppressed country. Naturally, people scoffed at her ideas and thought she was a little crazy, but in the end she persuaded them to let her have a horse and an escort to go and see the king.

Young King Charles VII of France had heard about Joan and decided to test her. He slipped into the ranks of the army and let one of his trusted associates occupy the throne. When Joan came into the room, she barely acknowledged the man on the throne, but promptly walked up to Charles and curtsied to him as her king. This so impressed the king that he gave her command over his 12,000 troops. At first the French soldiers did not want to obey her, but when they saw that all who followed her succeeded and all who disregarded her failed, they came to look upon her as their leader.

Clad in a suit of white armor and flying her own standard, Joan of Arc liberated the besieged city of Orleans in 1429 and defeated the English in four other battles. Twice she was wounded, but each time she recovered and went on fighting. Her orders seemed to be those of a military genius. She marched into the city of Reims and stood with sword and banner in hand while Charles was crowned king. She fought in the Battle of Paris until she was captured at Compiègne by English allies, who sold her to the English for 16,000 francs. She was imprisoned, tried as a heretic, and then burned at the stake in 1431.

Although this is a sad ending, it does not take away from Joan's greatness. She was courageous enough to follow the personal inspiration to which all of us are entitled. As the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."⁴

To other girls in the fifteenth century, Joan of Arc seemed to be very different. Sisters, don't be afraid to be different in our century! Sometimes we have to be different in order to maintain Church standards. So I repeat, don't be afraid to be different, but be as good as you can be. Many girls are concerned about their friends' conduct and style of dress. Such conduct may be motivated by a desire to be accepted by the peer group. Joan of Arc did not worry about what her friends did, but rather about what she knew she should do.

NARRATOR:

Friends may not always decide to make correct choices, but we can be an example to them as we stand for what's right...even if we must stand alone. From the 1997 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Janette Hales Beckham shares a modern example illustrating this principle.

(President Janette Hales Beckham, April 1997 General Young Women Meeting)

One young woman named Allison told us about a friend who is an example to her because her friend chose not to gossip. She encouraged other friends not to. They listened, and Allison and her friends quit gossiping.

When Rachel became a teenager, her friends started swearing more and more. She knew that was wrong. Rachel had the courage to go against what others were doing. She chose not to swear. Through her example, she was a modern pioneer.

Danielle is a Beehive class president. She tries to be a good example for the other girls in her class by attending all of her meetings. She lives in an area where drugs and violence are a major problem. "I have chosen not to be involved with those kinds of people," she wrote. "I do not want to ruin my life. I have chosen to keep the commandments and follow Heavenly Father by doing what is right and by following in His footsteps."

Another young woman, Melinda, was in junior high, and a couple of boys in a mall offered alcohol to her and her friend. Melinda didn't know what to do, but her best friend told the boys she and Melinda didn't drink. The boys made fun of them, but it didn't matter. Melinda said, "[My friend] leads the way for others . . . just like a pioneer. . . . Latter-day pioneers keep me on the path to the celestial kingdom, and I'm so thankful for them."

So many of you young women are great examples. I know about a group of young women who make a point at lunchtime of sitting by someone eating alone and becoming a friend to that person. Some of you have family difficulties, yet you stay strong in the gospel. Some of you are the only active members in your families. One young woman in a large city has to transfer to three different buses just to get to sacrament meeting on her own. The Lord loves you for your strength and your courage. He is always there for you. You are not alone.

NARRATOR:

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld also shares an example of a young woman who was a glowing example to a classmate, and in turn, her own family!

(Margaret D. Nadauld, April 2002 General Young Women Meeting)

When you live the high standards of the church every day, you hold high the torch. A girl I will call Liz is an example of what I am talking about. She was a student in a math class with a girl I will call Lindsay, who noticed that there was just something about Liz that "glowed," as she put it. Lindsay admitted that she really didn't think Liz knew her, but she still made her feel good. She really stood up for what she believed, and she always made others feel good and included. For several weeks Lindsay observed Liz. Then one day, Liz didn't show up at school. Then another and then another passed. Lindsay finally learned that Liz was very ill with life-threatening meningitis.

She came home from school and just sat at the table crying. It wasn't like she and Liz were close friends, but she said to her mom that they just had to do something to help her. Lindsay suggested that perhaps their whole family could fast and pray for Liz. What a shock it was for the mother to hear that coming from one of her own children, because fasting and prayer had not been mentioned in their home for years. When Lindsay and her mom talked with the rest of the family about it that night at supper, there was some resistance, but Lindsay pleaded with them and finally they all agreed to fast and pray for Liz, a stranger. The most wonderful thing happened. It wasn't long before Liz returned to school appearing healthy and happy as ever. But even more important than this, the experience brought the most remarkable spirit of hope into Lindsay's home. Because of it, some serious changes have taken place in their family. They are now having family prayer together, something that had not happened for years.

Liz's goodness glowed, and it was catching. Liz, if you are here tonight, I would just like to say, "Thank you! By your goodness you have blessed at least one whole family whom you probably do not even know. And who knows how many others have been guided as you held high your torch."

Being good makes you feel good, and it also makes others feel good! Can I just tell you this—it is so much easier to do what is right than it is to do what is wrong. Life is so much less complicated when you are good.

NARRATOR:

We'll always be blessed for making righteous choices. In the 2000 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Sharon G. Larsen uses the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who stood for what they believed in... despite a dramatic consequence!

(Sharon G. Larsen, April 2000 General Young Women Meeting)

Remember the story of three young men who had made such a commitment? They lived in Babylon, where people were not following the Lord. These young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, stood as witnesses of God at the peril of their lives. Living under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar, they were required by decree that on a certain day when the music started, all the people in the kingdom were to kneel and worship a solid gold 90-foot form of a man who represented the king. Anyone refusing would be thrown into a fiery furnace. There must have been thousands of people in Babylon that day for the festivities and to witness the dedication of this spectacular golden idol.

When the music began and the herald announced that all must kneel, everyone obeyed--everyone, that is, but those brave Hebrews. They refused to insult their God. Can you

imagine the courage of these young men? No threats from the king could dissuade them. With faith in their God, they stood together and prayed as they were bound and carried to be burned. The furnace was so hot the men who threw them in died. King Nebuchadnezzar stood by to watch the death of these three infidels. Looking into the inferno, he asked his advisers, "Didn't we throw three people into the fire?" They assured him indeed they had. Not quite believing what he saw, the puzzled king said: "But I see four men loose and walking in the middle of the fire, and [most puzzling of all] they have no hurt. The form of the fourth man is like that of the Son of God" (see Dan. 3:24-25).

Nebuchadnezzar then called to the Hebrews to come out of the furnace and declared them to be servants of the Most High God. He sent out another decree protecting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (see Dan. 3:26-30).

What does it mean to stand as a witness of God? It means we will not bow down or give in or be persuaded to do anything contrary to God's will. It means we will risk speaking up when our knees are shaking. It means we will listen and follow the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost.

NARRATOR:

When we partake of the sacrament, members of the church are reminded of their covenant to stand as a witness of God. In the 2008 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Susan W. Tanner tells about some she knows well who kept their covenant by standing as a witness.

(Susan W. Tanner, April 2008, General Young Women Meeting)

As you keep that covenant, you will stand as a witness among your peers. Recently my own children and their spouses were remembering times through the years when they had stood for correct values in the face of peer pressure. One would not participate in a cheer competition on Sunday; another told his employer that he could not work on the Sabbath day. One refused to watch a pornographic movie at a friend's house when he was only 11; another refused to look with classmates at pornographic magazines. Both were ostracized socially for some time thereafter. Another child refused to succumb to bad, crass, vulgar language in her work environment. One refused liquor that his friend had stolen out of his parents' locked cabinet. Another, who was the only Latter-day Saint member in her class, stood to give an English-class presentation and ended up fielding questions about the Book of Mormon. Our married children have continued to bear children in the face of worldly criticism.

In these moments they could have felt alone; but as they stood as witnesses, they felt the companionship and sustaining presence of the Holy Ghost. They also were armed with blessings that come from obedience to God's commandments. He has promised us: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."⁵

My children were truly upheld by His hand as they witnessed of God by standing steadfast in keeping His commandments. I have been blessed and strengthened by their examples.

NARRATOR:

You're listening to stories from the General Young Women Meetings here on the Mormon Channel. The topic is standing as a witness. In the next story, Sister Maragaret D. Nadauld shares several stories about young women around the world who had the courage to stand as a witness. This was given in the 2000 General Young Women Meeting.

(Margaret D. Nadauld, April 2000 General Young Women Meeting)

Whitney is a very bright 14-year-old girl who joined the Church about a year ago. It was a magical moment as I looked at the girls' soccer team who were there for her baptism. They had been there for each other many times. That's the way it is with teams, and this team was one of the best, in soccer--and in life. Each girl was a Beehive, setting an example, standing as a witness of goodness, even on the playing field. Whitney liked being part of that. It felt good.

After her baptism, Whitney stood before us with her friend Elizabeth. Their faces were glowing, their eyes were bright, and their smiles sincere as they repeated these words they had learned by heart: "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.'" Whitney already had the whole Young Women theme memorized. In fact, it was because Whitney's friends had stood as witnesses that we were all there on that memorable day to welcome a beautiful daughter of God into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

NARRATOR:

In the same address, Sister Nadauld gives another example of a young woman in Russia.

(Margaret D. Nadauld, April 2000 General Young Women Meeting)

Anya lives in Russia. When she was only 14 years old, she was being taught the gospel by the missionaries. One day in her school class, the teacher was saying false things about the Church and about the Book of Mormon. There were no Latter-day Saints in the school to defend it; but little Anya, who was not even a member, only an investigator of the Church, knew that what the teacher was saying was wrong. She stood up in front of the whole class and defended the Book of Mormon and the Church. What courage! She told them that what they were saying was not true and that she knew the Book of Mormon was true, and if anyone wanted to know the truth for themselves, she invited them to read it like she had done. Then Anya went home and told the missionaries she was ready to be baptized. I love Anya's courage as she stood as a witness at an important time.

Standing as a witness in all things means *all* things--big things, little things, in all conversations, in jokes, in games played and books read and music listened to, in causes supported, in service rendered, in clothes worn, in friends made.

NARRATOR:

Again, in the same talk, Sister Naudald reminds us that we must "stand as a witness in all things and in all places", whether in the quiet of our bedroom or in a noisy, distracting world. Sister Nadauld's final example concerns a young woman who stood up for what was right in front of her entire high school class!

(Margaret D. Nadauld, April 2000 General Young Women Meeting)

I read about Shannon in the *New Era*. Her high school speech teacher assigned a group project to the students. They were to select a scene from a play to perform for the class. One group chose a questionable scene dealing with morality issues. The teacher allowed them to keep their selection "for the sake of art." But knowing that it might be offensive, the teacher gave permission for those who felt uncomfortable to leave the room.

As the students' scene began, Shannon felt a little bit nervous. Several of her classmates blushed and giggled uneasily, but no one left. She looked at a few of her Latter-day Saint friends, watching for one of them to give the signal for them all to walk out together. But none of them did. Shannon remained at her desk with her head down so no one could see her crimson cheeks. She felt very uncomfortable, but she was also afraid to leave. After all, it was art, right? Shannon states:

"At [that] moment, the Young Women theme came into my mind: 'We will "stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.'" (Mosiah 18:9). Immediately, I knew what [I was going- to] do. 'All places' meant everywhere, even in a classroom with my friends.

"Quietly, I got up and left the room. That was it. No one got up and followed me. No one applauded my valiant act. No one was converted by my example. But inside I knew I had done the right thing" (Shannon D. Jensen, "Stand as a Witness," *New Era*, Nov. 1998, 10).

NARRATOR:

Around the world, young women may frequently feel worldly pressure to make improper choices. In the 2006 General Young Women Meeting, Sister Elaine S. Dalton gives some examples of some who made the proper choice.

(Elaine S. Dalton, April 2006, General Young Women Meeting)

The faces of the young women in West Africa shine with the radiant light of the Holy Ghost. They live the standards in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, they are guided by the Spirit, and they are preparing to be leaders. They love the Lord and are grateful for His light in their lives. Some of these young women walked three hours to share their testimonies with me. Because of them, I will never be the same.

When I was in South America, the young women and their leaders sang, "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus." They not only sang the words, but they meant it. In Asia and India, young women are examples of faith, modest dress, and purity. Their eyes shine and they are happy. The young women in England, Ireland, and Wales are standing for truth and righteousness in their schools. In an ever-darkening world, they are making a difference. Some of you are the only members in your family or your school. You are making a difference. You are leading in righteous ways.

Not so long ago, I hiked with a group of youth to the top of Ensign Peak. There we looked at the city of Salt Lake and the temple and talked of the sacrifice so many had made for the gospel. Then each of the youth unfurled a banner. On their banners they had drawn symbols of their message to the world—what they wanted to stand for in these

latter days. It was thrilling to hear the commitment and testimony of each one. Then we sang "High on the Mountain Top" and the youth cheered together, "Hurrah for Israel!" I echo those words today. Hurrah for you! I hope you will never hesitate to "let your light so shine . . . that [others will] see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." I hope you too will raise your banners high.

NARRATOR:

Thank you for listening to stories from the General Young Women Meetings on the Mormon Channel. Be firm in what you know is right. Stand as a witness of god! For more information go to our website at radio.lds.org. Tell your friends about the Mormon Channel!