
How Can I Become the Woman of Whom I Dream?

President Gordon B. Hinckley



Gordon B. Hinckley, "How Can I Become the Woman of Whom I Dream?" *Ensign*, May 2001, 93

Thank you for that beautiful hymn. Thank you for your prayers; thank you for your faith; thank you for what you are. Young women of the Church, thank you so much. And thanks to you, Sister Nadauld, Sister Thomas, Sister Larsen, for the wonderful talks that you have given to these young women tonight.

What a wonderful sight you are in this great hall. Hundreds of thousands of others are assembled across the world. They will hear us in more than a score of languages. Our speech will be translated into their native tongues.

It is an overwhelming responsibility to speak to you. And at the same time it is a tremendous opportunity. I pray for the direction of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, of which we have heard so much this night.

Though of various nationalities, you are all of one great family. You are daughters of God. You are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In your youth you speak of the future, and it is bright with promise. You speak of hope and faith and achievement. You speak of goodness and love and peace. You speak of a better world than we have ever known.

You are creatures of divinity; you are daughters of the Almighty. Limitless is your potential. Magnificent is your future, if you will take control of it. Do not let your lives drift in a fruitless and worthless manner.

Someone gave me a copy of my high school yearbook the other day. It seems that when people get tired of old books, they send them to me.

I spent an hour thumbing through it, looking at the pictures of my friends of 73 years ago, my high school class of 1928.

Most of those in that yearbook have now lived their lives and gone beyond. Some seem to have lived almost without purpose, while others lived with great achievements.

I looked at the faces of the boys who were my friends and associates. Once they were youthful and bright and energetic. Now those who are left are wrinkled and slow in their walk. Their lives still have meaning, but they are not as vital as they once were. I looked in that old yearbook at the faces of the girls I knew. Many of them have passed on, and the remainder live in the shadows of life. But they are still beautiful and fascinating.

My thoughts go back to those young men and women of my youth, back to where you are today. By and large, we were a happy lot. We enjoyed life. I think we were ambitious. The dark and terrible Depression which swept over the earth would not come for another year. Nineteen twenty-eight was a season of high hopes and splendid dreams.

In our quieter moments we were all dreamers. The boys dreamed of mountains yet to climb and careers yet to be lived. The girls dreamed of becoming the kind of woman that most of them saw in their mothers.

As I have thought of this, I have concluded to title my talk for tonight “How Can I Become the Woman of Whom I Dream?”

Some months ago I spoke to you and the young men of the Church. I suggested six B’s that you ought to pursue. Do you think we could name them together? Let’s try: Be Grateful. Be Smart. Be Clean. Be True. Be Humble. Be Prayerful.

I have not the slightest doubt that these patterns of behavior will yield success and happiness and peace. I recommend them to you again, with a promise that if you will follow them your lives will be fruitful of great good. I believe you will be successful in your endeavors. As you grow old, I am satisfied that you will look back with appreciation for the manner in which you chose to live.

Tonight, in speaking to you young women, I may touch on some of these same things without repeating the same language. They are worthy of repetition, and I again commend them to you.

In the yearbook of which I have spoken is the picture of a young woman. She was bright and effervescent and beautiful. She was a charmer. Life for her could be summed up in one short word—fun. She dated the boys and danced away the days and nights, studying a little but not too much, just enough to get grades that would take her through graduation. She married a boy of her own kind. Alcohol took possession of her life. She could not leave it alone. She was a slave to it. Her body succumbed to its treacherous grip. Sadly, her life faded without achievement.

There is a picture of another girl in that yearbook. She was not particularly beautiful. But she had a wholesome look about her, a sparkle in her eyes, and a smile on her face. She knew why she was in school. She was there to learn. She dreamed of the kind of woman she wanted to be and patterned her life accordingly.

She also knew how to have fun, but knew when to stop and put her mind on other things.

There was a boy in school at the time. He had come from a small rural town. He had very little money. He brought lunch in a brown paper bag. He looked a little like the farm from which he had come. There was nothing especially handsome or dashing about him. He was a good student. He had set a goal for himself. It was lofty and, at times, appeared almost impossible of attainment.

These two fell in love. People said, “What does he see in her?” Or, “What does she see in him?” They each saw something wonderful which no one else saw.

Upon graduating from the university, they married. They scrimped and worked. Money was hard to come by. He went on to graduate school. She continued to work for a time, and then their children came. She gave her attention to them.

A few years ago, I was riding a plane home from the East. It was late at night. I walked down the aisle in the semidarkness. I saw a woman asleep with her head on the shoulder of her husband. She awakened as I approached. I immediately recognized the girl I had known in high school so long before. I recognized the boy I had also known. They were now approaching old age. As we talked, she explained that their children were grown, that they were grandparents. She proudly told me that they were returning from the East, where he had gone to deliver a paper. There at a great convention he had been honored by his peers from across the nation.

I learned that they had been active in the Church, serving in whatever capacity they were asked to serve. By every measure, they were successful. They had accomplished the goals which they had set for themselves. They had been honored and respected and had made a tremendous contribution to the society of which they were a part. She had become the woman of whom she had dreamed. She had exceeded that dream.

As I returned to my seat on the plane, I thought of those two girls of whom I have spoken to you tonight. The life of the one had been spelled out in a three-letter word: *F-U-N*. It had been lived aimlessly, without stability, without contribution to society, without ambition. It had ended in misery and pain and early death.

The life of the other had been difficult. It had meant scrimping and saving. It had meant working and struggling to keep going. It had meant simple food and plain clothing and a very modest apartment in the years of her husband’s initial effort to get started in his profession. But out of that seemingly sterile soil there had grown a plant, yes, two plants, side by side, that blossomed and bloomed in a beautiful and wonderful way.

Those beautiful blossoms spoke of service to fellowmen, of unselfishness one to another, of love and respect and faith in one’s companion, of happiness as they met the needs of others in the various activities which they pursued.

As I pondered the conversation with these two, I determined within myself to do a little better, to be a little more dedicated, to set my sights a little higher, to love my wife a little more dearly, to help her and treasure her and look after her.

And so, my dear, dear young friends, I feel so earnest, so sincere, so anxious to say something to you this night which will help you become the woman of whom you dream.

As a starter, there must be cleanliness, for immorality will blight your life and leave a scar that will never entirely leave you. There must be purpose. We are here to accomplish something, to bless society with our talents and our learning. There can be fun, yes. But there must be recognition of the fact that life is serious, that the risks are great, but that you can overcome them if you will discipline yourselves and seek the unfailing strength of the Lord.

Let me first assure you that if you have made a mistake, if you have become involved in any immoral behavior, all is not lost. Memory of that mistake will likely linger, but the deed can be forgiven, and you can rise above the past to live a life fully acceptable unto the Lord where there has been repentance. He has promised that He will forgive your sins and remember them no more against you (see D&C 58:42).

He has set up the machinery with helpful parents and Church leaders to assist you in your difficulty. You can put behind you any evil with which you have been involved. You can go forward with a renewal of hope and acceptability to a far better way of life.

But there will be scars that will remain. The best way, the only way for you, is to avoid any entrapment with evil. President George Albert Smith used to say, "Stay on the Lord's side of the line" (*Sharing the Gospel with Others*, sel. Preston Nibley [1948], 42). You have within you instincts, powerful and terribly persuasive, urging you at times to let go and experience a little fling. You must not do it. You cannot do it. You are daughters of God with tremendous potential. He has great expectations concerning you, as do others. You cannot let down for a minute. You cannot give in to an impulse. There must be discipline, strong and unbending. Flee from temptation, as Joseph fled from the wiles of Potiphar's wife.

There is nothing in all this world as magnificent as virtue. It glows without tarnish. It is precious and beautiful. It is above price. It cannot be bought or sold. It is the fruit of self-mastery.

You young women spend a lot of time thinking of the boys. You can have a good time with them, but never overstep the line of virtue. Any young man who invites or encourages you or demands that you indulge in any kind of sexual behavior is unworthy of your company. Get him out of your life before both yours and his are blighted. If you can thus discipline yourselves, you will be grateful for as long as you live. Most of you will marry, and your marriage will be much the happier for your earlier restraint. You will be worthy to go to the house of the Lord. There is no adequate substitute for this marvelous blessing. The Lord has given a wonderful mandate. He has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45). This becomes a commandment to be observed with diligence and discipline. And there is attached to it the promise of marvelous and wonderful blessings. He has said to those who live with virtue:

“Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. ...

“The Holy Ghost”—of which we have spoken tonight—“shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:45-46).

Could there be a greater or more beautiful promise than this?

Find purpose in your life. Choose the things you would like to do, and educate yourselves to be effective in their pursuit. For most it is very difficult to settle on a vocation. You are hopeful that you will marry and that all will be taken care of. In this day and time, a girl needs an education. She needs the means and skills by which to earn a living should she find herself in a situation where it becomes necessary to do so.

Study your options. Pray to the Lord earnestly for direction. Then pursue your course with resolution.

The whole gamut of human endeavor is now open to women. There is not anything that you cannot do if you will set your mind to it. You can include in the dream of the woman you would like to be a picture of one qualified to serve society and make a significant contribution to the world of which she will be a part.

I was in the hospital the other day for a few hours. I became acquainted with my very cheerful and expert nurse. She is the kind of woman of whom you girls could dream. When she was young she decided she wished to be a nurse. She received the necessary education to qualify for the highest rank in the field. She worked at her vocation and became expert at it. She decided she wanted to serve a mission and did so. She married. She has three children. She works now as little or as much as she wishes. There is such a demand for people with her skills that she can do almost anything she pleases. She serves in the Church. She has a good marriage. She has a good life. She is the kind of woman of whom you might dream as you look to the future.

For you, my dear friends, the sky is the limit. You can be excellent in every way. You can be first class. There is no need for you to be a scrub. Respect yourself. Do not feel sorry for yourself. Do not dwell on unkind things others may say about you. Particularly, pay no attention to what some boy might say to demean you. He is no better than you. In fact, he has already belittled himself by his actions. Polish and refine whatever talents the Lord has given you. Go forward in life with a twinkle in your eye and a smile on your face, but with great and strong purpose in your heart. Love life and look for its opportunities, and forever and always be loyal to the Church.

Never forget that you came to earth as a child of the divine Father, with something of divinity in your very makeup. The Lord did not send you here to fail. He did not give you life to waste it. He bestowed upon you the gift of mortality that you might gain experience—positive, wonderful, purposeful experience—that will lead to life eternal. He has given you this glorious Church, His Church, to guide you and direct you, to give you opportunity for growth and experience, to teach

you and lead you and encourage you, to bless you with eternal marriage, to seal upon you a covenant between you and Him that will make of you His chosen daughter, one upon whom He may look with love and with a desire to help. May God bless you richly and abundantly, my dear young friends, His wonderful daughters.

Of course there will be some problems along the way. There will be difficulties to overcome. But they will not last forever. He will not forsake you.

*When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings; name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done. ...*

*So amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged; God is over all.
Count your many blessings; angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.
("Count Your Blessings," Hymns, no. 241)*

Look to the positive. Know that He is watching over you, that He hears your prayers and will answer them, that He loves you and will make that love manifest. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in all that you do as you look to become the kind of woman of whom you dream. You can do it. You will have friends and loved ones to help. And God will bless you as you pursue your course. This, girls, is my humble promise and prayer in your behalf, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.