

## **January 2 2022 Fireside**

# **“Being the Mothers and Fathers Who Raise and Teach the Lord's Youth Battalion”**

### **1. What is the Lord's Youth Battalion? What does it mean to be part of it? What does it mean for the whole family?**

#### **Esther's Thoughts:**

1a.) For Strength of Youth, January 2021, from the YW and YM general presidencies: “President Russell M. Nelson has invited each of you to join in that work as part of “the youth battalion of the Lord.” But what is a battalion? A battalion is a specialized unit designed to accomplish specific tasks together. That means you are part of a specialized unit to find and accomplish your part in the Lord’s great work.”

Pres. Nelson coined this term back in June of 2018 (someone correct me if I’m wrong, but I couldn’t find any earlier source of this term) at a youth Face to Face event. He said: “So my question to you is ‘Are you willing to enlist in the youth battalion of the Lord to help gather Israel’” (“Hope of Israel,” June 2018)?

1b.) Pres. Nelson also answered that question in this talk. He said: “Tonight, we want you to know that the gathering of Israel ultimately means offering the gospel of Jesus Christ to God’s children on both sides of the veil who have neither made crucial covenants with God nor received their essential ordinances.”

Pres. Nelson: “The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith that now, meaning our day, is the eleventh hour and the last time that He will call laborers into His vineyard for the express purpose of gathering the elect from the four quarters of the earth.” He then cited Doctrine and Covenants 33:3 & 6 in the footnote: “For behold, the field is white already to harvest; and it is the eleventh hour, and the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard... And even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice.”

Pres. Nelson: “My dear extraordinary youth, you were sent to earth at this precise time, the most crucial time in the history of the world, to help gather Israel. There is nothing happening on this earth right now that is more important than that. There is nothing of greater consequence. Absolutely nothing.

“This gathering should mean everything to you. This is the mission for which you were sent to earth.”

1c.) It means that the whole family must be engaged in this work as a whole, and that parents need to be supporting their specialists in the specific work that only they can do for Israel.

A battalion functions as a specialized group in limited independent operations (see Wikipedia definition of “battalion”). The youth are limited by what they do because of things like: age, money, communications, transportation, they may not have a cell phone or email or a job, or could run to the store to buy decorations for activities or minister to class or quorum members. But they can still run independently in the mission to gather Israel. That’s where families come in, and that’s where the “Children and Youth program” guidebook comes in. When the family works together to help children (and youth-aged children) seek revelation and accomplish goals, the youth will become more spiritually

independent, more emotionally resilient, and more capable of handling the challenges that come with gathering Israel in a world increasing with commotion.

It means parents train their children to be vital members of the Lord's battalion.

### **Marlene's Thoughts:**

#### **What is the Lord's Youth Battalion?**

On June 3rd, 2018 President and Sister Nelson gave a worldwide devotional for the youth asking the youth to enlist in the Lord's Youth Battalion. This was not just a fun activity or a passing theme for the year. And I'd like to add, this devotional was heavy. I don't think I've ever heard anything like it. Everyone, it doesn't matter who you are, needs to listen to this devotional. When this devotional was given, I didn't watch it. I didn't have children at the time and I was focused on working with the Relief Society. I of course heard about it and the details but did not realize the gravity of what was being asked of the youth until I listened to it much later. This was the Lord asking the youth to identify themselves as the elect of God. This was the Lord asking them to be identified as those whom he could trust to carry out the necessary missions that will need to be fulfilled before Christ returns.

This devotional was so rich and heavy, I hardly know where to start. To fully understand what the Lord was asking of the youth, you have to go watch the devotional yourselves but I am going to try to summarize it here to the best of my ability.

First, President Nelson began by pleading with the youth to take their questions to the Lord.

“Now I plead with Each of you to do as the teenage Joseph did. Take your questions directly to your Heavenly father in Prayer. Ask Him, in the name of Jesus Christ, to guide you. You can learn for yourself, right now at your age, how to receive personal revelation. Nothing will make a bigger difference in your life than that. I promise you ... that if you will sincerely and persistently do the spiritual work needed to develop the crucial spiritual skill of learning how to hear the whisperings of the Holy Ghost, you will have all the direction you will ever need in your life.

Sister Nelson then spoke with the youth asking them, “what were you born to do?” We all wonder that. What is my purpose? Why am I here now? What is my mission?

Sister Nelson then went on to say, “How I wish you could watch a ten minute video of your premortal life on Youtube. The prophet Joseph Smith taught that if you could gaze into Heaven for five minutes, you would know more on the topic than if you had studied it your whole life. So just imagine if you could gaze just for ten minutes on your premortal life.

I believe if you could see yourself living with you premortal parents with Jesus Christ, if you could observe what you did premortally and see yourself making commitments, even covenants with others including your mentors and teachers. If you could see yourself courageously responding to attacks on truth and valiantly standing up for Jesus Christ. I believe that everyone of you would have the increased power, increased commitment and eternal perspective to help you overcome any and all of your confusion, doubts, struggles, and problems; all of them. I believe if you could remember who you said you would help while you are here on earth or what anguishing experiences you agreed to go through that whatever tough situation you are currently in or will be in, you would say, “Oh now I remember. Now I understand. This difficult situation makes sense to me now. With the Lords help, I can do this.”

She then spoke about the idea of coming to earth having a scroll attached to our spirits that read, Things to do while on Earth,” Just to give a simple list they included, one, get a body. Two, be tested. Three, choose to follow Jesus Christ and stand up for him just as you did premortally. Four, choose to repent daily and partake of the sacrament. Five, find and fulfill your mortal missions.

This last item on the list that I want to focus on as it ties directly into being part of the Lord's Youth Battalion. Sister Nelson explained, “...premortally you and I were each given wonderful missions to fulfill while we were here on earth. We have opportunities to fulfill our mortal missions but we don't have to. ... We have our agency to choose how we spend our time and, talents, and resources. Infact, what we choose to do is actually part of our testing. ... Will we choose to do whatever it takes to fulfill the wonderful missions of which we were sent to earth? While that question simmers in your mind, let's shift and talk about why you are here at this particular time which is such a unique time in the history of the earth. Why are you here on earth right now? Why were you not born back in the 1980's or 30 years from now?

Sister Nelson then told of an experience she had on June 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 in Moscow Russia. She explained that she met with about one hundred of the Russian sisters and then when she stood up to speak to them she had the desire to get to know them by lineage. She asked them to stand as the tribe in their patriarchal blessing was called. She said that out of the twelve tribes, eleven were accounted for out of that group of less than one hundred women. The only tribe missing was Levi. She then went on to explain that after the meeting they left for Armenia where they discovered that a missionary from Gilbert, AZ was serving there who was from the tribe of Levi. She commented on how astonished she felt as having met people from all twelve tribes in only a twenty four hour period. She then concluded by stating, “I am so grateful for the privilege I had of seeing the fruits of the gathering of Israel first hand. ... My dear brothers and sisters, these are indeed the latter-days. There's never been a time like this in the history of this world. Premortally you and I committed to do a great work while we are here on earth. And with the Lord's help, we will do it.

President Nelson then spoke again tying everything together with the commitment to the youth.

“My dear brothers and sisters, these surely are the latter-days and the Lord is hastening his work to gather Israel. That gathering is the most important thing taking place on the earth today. Nothing else compares in magnitude. Nothing else compares in importance. Nothing else compares in majesty. And if you choose to, if you want to, you can be a big part of it. You can be a big part of something great, something grand, something majestic. When we speak of the gathering we are simply speaking of this fundamental truth, everyone of our Heavenly Father's children on both sides of the veil deserves to hear the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. They decide for themselves if they want to know more. Those whose lineages from the various tribes of Israel are those whose hearts will most likely be turned to the Lord. He said, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.” Those who are of the house of Israel will most easily recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and will desire to be gathered into his fold they will want to become members of his church, make covenants with Him and with Heavenly Father, and receive their essential ordinances. The Lord told the prophet Joseph Smith that now, meaning our day, is the eleventh hour and the last time that he will call laborers into his vineyard for the express purpose of gathering the elect from the four corners of the earth.

My question to you, to everyone here tonight between the ages of 12 to 18 is this, would you like to be a big part of the greatest challenge, the greatest cause, the greatest work on earth today? Would you like to help gather Israel during these precious latter-days? Would you who are the elect be willing to help find the elect who have not heard the message of the restored gospel? Would you like to be among

those swift messengers of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke? ... Our Heavenly Father has reserved many of his most noble spirits. Perhaps I might say, His finest team for this final phase. Those noble spirits, those finest players, those heroes are you. I testify that the gathering is now and it is real.

President Nelson then told of an experience he had many years ago when he was serving as General President of the Sunday School. In a meeting he was attending, President Kimball asked that they pray for the people of China, serve them, and learn their language so that China could someday be open to missionary work. President Nelson took that request seriously and learned Chinese. He explained about the opportunities that he has since had both professionally and in the church because he followed the direction of the prophet. He said, "It is my testimony, when we follow through with whatever the prophet of God asks us to do, the way will be opened and lives will be changed. Now I hope you are asking yourself, what can I as a teenager do to help gather Israel? ... My dear extraordinary youth, you were sent to earth at this precise time, the most crucial time in the history of the world to help gather Israel. There is nothing happening on this earth right now that is more important than that. There is nothing of greater consequence, absolutely nothing. This gathering should mean everything to you. This *is* the mission for which you were sent here to earth. So my question to you is, are you willing to enlist in the Youth Battalion of the Lord to help gather Israel?"

What will help you? As you continue to read daily from the Book of Mormon, you will learn the doctrine of the gathering, truths about Jesus Christ, His atonement, the fulness of His gospel not found in the bible. The Book of Mormon is central to the gathering of Israel. Infact, if there were no Book of Mormon, the promised gathering of Israel would not occur.

And now I invite you to prepare by doing five more things. (As a reminder, he already asked the youth to learn how to receive direction from the Lord and to continue reading daily from the Book of Mormon) Five things that will change you and help you change the world.

First, disengage from a constant reliance on social media in order to decrease it's worldly influence upon you ... by holding a seven day fast from social media. This social media fast can be just between you and the Lord. It will be your sign to him that you are willing to step away from the world in order to enlist in His Youth Battalion. (This is the way in which the youth enlist in the Lord's Youth Battalion. A seven day fast from social media.)

A second invitation is to make a weekly sacrifice of time to the Lord for three weeks in a row. Let Him know that you want to be part of His Youth Battalion more than you want anything else. For three weeks give up something you like to do and use that time to help gather Israel.

My third invitation is to do a thorough life assessment with the Lord ... to ensure that your feet are firmly planted on the covenant path.

My fourth invitation is for you to pray daily that all of God's children may receive blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You and I are living to see and will continue to see Israel gather with great power and you can be part of the power behind that gathering.

My fifth invitation is to stand out, Be different from the world. You and I know that you are to be a light unto the world. Therefore, the Lord needs you to look like, sound like, act like and dress like a true disciple of Jesus Christ. The booklet entitled for the strength of youth should be your standard. It is the standard he expects all His youth to uphold. (He then committed the youth to also pray about who they could give a copy of For the Strength of the Youth to.)"

**What does it mean to be part of that Battalion?** Let's look to Zion's Camp for some insight. This comes from Church History Topics on lds.org.

“From May to June 1834, approximately 230 men, women, and children marched to Missouri to help the Saints who had been expelled from Jackson County, Missouri, the previous year. This expedition, known today as Zion’s Camp, was initially called the Camp of Israel. It was formed after Joseph Smith received a revelation in February 1834 commanding him to call up the strength of the Lord’s house to redeem Zion from its enemies. The camp was meant to be more of a defense but others saw them as a threat. . . . Aware of the opposition to the camp . . . Joseph Smith petitioned the Lord for guidance. On June 22, 1834, he received a revelation stating that it was no longer required that the camp redeem Zion. Before that redemption could occur, the revelation continued, the elders of the Church needed to receive an endowment of power in the Kirtland house of the Lord, which was then under construction. The camp began to disband at the end of June.

Although the Saints were not restored to their Jackson County land, most who traveled with the Camp of Israel did not see the expedition as a failure. Some, such as Brigham Young, regarded it as a privilege to march with Joseph Smith and learn leadership principles from him. Others saw God’s hand blessing their lives throughout the journey. The expedition also served as a proving ground for future Church leaders. When the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was formed in February 1835, 8 of the original 12 men called had marched with the Camp of Israel. All men called as the first Seventies in February 1835 were also members of the camp.”

Two hundred and thirty men, women, and children marched in a campaign that seemed to be a failure to most. But in the end, it was, a Brigham Young said, “a proving ground”. It was a circumstance that let the Lord know who He could trust and who He could rely on as His future leaders. Can we conclude then that a similar thing is happening here? When as President Nelson said our purpose for being here on earth right now is to help gather Israel, and he made a special point to explain that God will always make a way for us to complete what the Prophet has asked us to do, we can conclude that if they and we choose not to help in gathering Israel, would Heavenly Father be able to trust us? Would He be able to trust us with further responsibilities if we can't follow through with the reason why we are here?

**What now does all of this mean for the whole family?** You might think, this is something the youth have been asked to do. It doesn't concern me. Or, I don't have teenagers or even children in the house right now. Or, I'm not working with the youth in the ward. In reality, this concerns everyone who is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Why?

In Alma 53 Helaman talks about the two thousand stripling warriors, all young men who were faithful in the testimony of the Lord. In Alma 53:17-18, 20-21, we see who these young men were.

Alma 53:17 And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea, to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives; yea, even they covenanted that they never would give up their liberty, but they would fight in all cases to protect the Nephites and themselves from bondage.  
18. Now behold, there were two thousand of those young men, who entered into this covenant and took their weapons of war to defend their country.

20. And they were all young men, and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

21. Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him.

**Alma 56: 45** And now I say unto you, my beloved brother Moroni, that never had I seen so great courage, nay, not amongst all the Nephites.

47. Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives;

They were young men who were converted unto the Lord. They were courageous. They were covenant makers and keepers. They essentially lived up to the standards established for the youth or rather the people of God. Now did they become all these things on their own? No.

In Alma 53 and 56 we read about their fathers, their commander Helaman, and the other Nephite brethren, and their mothers. Their Fathers were the Lamanites, the people of Ammon, who were converted and made a covenant to the Lord to never again shed blood.

**Alma 53:13** But it came to pass that when they saw the danger, and the many afflictions and tribulations which the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were desirous to take up arms in the defense of their country.

14. But behold, as they were about to take their weapons of war, they were overpowered by the persuasions of Helaman and his brethren, for they were about to break the oath which they had made.

15. And Helaman feared lest by so doing they should lose their souls; therefore all those who had entered into this covenant were compelled to behold their brethren wade through their afflictions, in their dangerous circumstances at this time.

16. But behold, it came to pass they had many sons, who had not entered into a covenant that they would not take their weapons of war to defend themselves against their enemies; therefore they did assemble themselves together at this time, as many as were able to take up arms, and they called themselves Nephites.

47. ...yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

48. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it.

Who were the people in their lives that helped them become those valiant warriors? Converted mothers and fathers to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Fathers who kept their covenants, Helaman and the other Nephite Brethren who supported their fathers in keeping their covenants and who protected and defended them. Mothers who taught them to always trust in the Lord. Mothers with valiant testimonies.

Every single one of us, whether a mother, father, sibling, extended family member, teacher, leader, or simply just a member of the church with youth in their ward, has the responsibility to be as the people who raised those two thousand stripling warriors. They would not have been able to fulfill their mission without the support, testimonies, teaching, and dedication to the Lord that those in their influence gave them. If the Youth have been commissioned to gather Israel, we have been commissioned to gather

Israel. Our task and responsibility is just as heavy as theirs as we may be asked someday of the Lord, Why did you not teach and guide the youth in your life to redeem Israel? Let us not fail in this regard lest the sin be on the heads of the parents.

I want to add here that no youth should be compelled to join the Lords Youth Battalion. No parent, teacher, leader, friend should obligate or ask, “have you joined the Lord's Youth Battalion?” As President Nelson stated, It is between them and the Lord. It is our job as the adults in their lives to live up to our covenants, teach our children, and support them in their mission. And if it will help you to support them by joining the Lord's Youth Battalion as well, I think that commitment would be accepted from you as well as the youth.

### **Micah's Thoughts:**

The Lord's youth battalion could have two meanings:

1. Any youth in the Lord's church throughout all the ages at the time and at the moment that they were young. People do not stay in this youth battalion forever; they eventually grow up.
2. There is *the* Lord's youth battalion, a special group of young and middle aged that will redeem Zion (D&C 101).

### **D&C 101:55-56**

55 And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and *take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age* also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry;

56 And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and *redeem my vineyard*; for it is mine; I have bought it with money.

### **2 Nephi 27:33-34**

33 Therefore, thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.

34 But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.

The footnote for verse 33 says “Israel, restoration of”.

I have a three hour video entirely on the redemption of Israel, which is the climax of the gathering of Israel, which is the restitution of Zion to the place of her inheritance.

President Nelson recently invited the youth to join the Lord's youth battalion and centered it on the gathering of Israel. He did this in 2018. As many here know, I believe the redemption of Zion is imminent so my belief is that President Nelson is calling the youth into group #2. There are vast differences between group #1 and group #2.

The first group, what does it mean to be a part of it?, simply means you are a youth who is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ and have covenanted the same covenants that are found in Mosiah 18:7-10, and one is living up to those covenants.

Whereas group 2, it means to be worthy of participation in the redemption of Zion and one of the huge qualifiers for it is found in D&C 101:12

12 And in that day all who are found upon the watch-tower, or in other words, all mine Israel, shall be saved.

The footnote for watchtower takes you to **Ezekiel 3:17**

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

And

### **Ezekiel 33:9**

9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

In order to be a part of the RoZ, one needs to be a watchmen, someone actively involved in the gathering of Israel. A watchman is not someone who quietly wittles away on a stick taking naps in the shade of the tower while claiming to be setting a good example; a watchman is on the tower opening their mouth.

Whether or not you are talking about group 1 or 2, what it means for the family is identical. The parents are responsible to raise up their children unto the lord or their children's blood will be on the parents' head. And the children themselves should be doing all they can in their own families to be watchmen for the Lord.

## **2.What does it mean to be “youth-led, adult supported” in the youth program? What does that mean for parents?**

### **Esther's Thoughts:**

2a.) It means that the youth are the leaders, and the adults support the youth in the youth's callings. A Young Woman class president has just as much stewardship over her class of girls as a Relief Society president has over her sisters. That means the class president – who in this day and age could be as young as 11 years old – prays over her girls, ministers to them, plans activities and services that will bless their lives, and is the authority to make decisions on behalf of the class.

2b.) I work in the Young Women with the youngest class, girls from ages 11 through 13. Our former class president has ADHD; our secretary lived on a farm outside of town; almost none of them had their own phones or any money of their own. They are as limited as leaders can be in what they can accomplish. But man, they held their meetings; they put on beautiful activities; they ministered to and cared for the girls in their class. And I know that they would not have accomplished as much as they did without the organic and tangible support their parents and grandparents gave them.

If you're wondering how you can do better and be better as parents to members of the Lord's Youth Battalion, (I'm suggesting this to myself as well) I encourage you to begin with Pres. Nelson's five invitations from 2018 for youth to enlist in the Lord's youth battalion to help gather Israel:

- Hold a seven-day fast from social media.
- Make a weekly sacrifice of time to the Lord for three weeks.
- Keep on the covenant path. If you are off, repent and get back on the path.
- Pray daily that all of God's children might receive the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Stand out. Be different. Be a light. Give to a friend one copy of the booklet For the Strength of Youth.

### **Marlene's Thoughts:**

#### **What does it mean to be "youth-led, adult supported" in the youth program?**

In 2018, President Nelson asked the youth of the church to enlist in The Lord's Youth Battalion. In 2019 the new Children and Youth Program was released creating a new youth-led, adult supported program. This program realigned the responsibilities of leaders and youth within the youth program. In the past, the Young Men and Young Women adult presidencies would primarily plan and direct all lessons and activities with the input of Young Men and Young Women youth presidencies. With realignment, While there were still adult leaders (and I might add, that things are still organized in their correct order under the priesthood), the Youth Presidencies became the leading force in the program to plan and direct the lessons with the adult leaders as the support system.

Sister Cordon in the the 2019 October General Conference explained in her talk, "Beloved Daughters", "As you know, at every level of the Church, the Lord calls presidencies to lead His people. Young women, being a member of a class presidency may be your first opportunity to participate in this inspired pattern of leadership. Adult leaders, make the calling of class presidencies a priority and then lead side-by-side with them, mentoring and guiding them so they can succeed. Whatever level of leadership experience a class presidency has, start where they are and help them develop the skills and confidence that will bless them as leaders. Stay close to them, but don't take over. The Spirit will guide you as you guide them.

Class presidencies, you have been called of God and trusted to lead a group of His daughters. "The Lord knows you. ... He chose you." You have been *set apart* by one who has priesthood authority; this means as you perform the duties of your calling, you exercise priesthood authority. You have an important work to do. Be sensitive to and act on the promptings of the Holy Ghost. As you do so, you can serve with confidence, for you do not serve alone!

Class presidents, we need your wisdom, voice, and energy in the new ward youth council that Elder Quentin L. Cook announced today. You are an essential part of the solution to meeting the needs of your brothers and sisters."

The youth have been asked to not only plan activities and teach lesson that are Christ centered and aid in the work of salvation but to make for themselves personal goals that help them become as their Saviour Jesus Christ. Elder Gong explained it in the Youth Face to Face in 2019 when the full program was unrolled. He said, "The Children and Youth Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is exciting and unique. It invites you to participate fully in the work of salvation and exultation in the holy temple, as a missionary, and in ministering. Built around the gospel core, this is our single church effort for all our youth and children everywhere. And it focuses on you become your best divine self through activities and service, learning, and growth." The goals include spiritual, intellectual, social, and physical goals. Youth are also now responsible for creating and carrying through with their

own goals. There is no longer a personal progress book or merit badge requirements. Leaders nor parents are no longer responsible to ensure that youth are completing and signing off on goal. They are not to compel them to set goals or to set certain types of goals; only to support them in making their goals and following through. This could look like a variety of different things.

In our family, my husband and I decided that the best way to support our daughter in making and following through with goals is to work together as a family in making and keeping goals. We started by each of us taking our own poster board, dividing it into the four areas, spiritual, physical, social, and intellectual, and writing out our own goals. We would then share and talk about our goals together so that we can all support each other. We also made a family goal that we all agreed on together to work on. Then several months later, we returned together as a family to read over our goals and talk about how we did. Some goals we did great at. Some goals, maybe only mediocre, and other goals it was evident we had totally forgotten about. After reviewing our past goals, we started again with a new poster board, renewed some goals, revamped other goals, and created new ones.

At church leaders are not too compel youth to set goals but rather ask them how they can support them in completing their goals. Activities, lessons, fireside, service opportunities, ministering, etc. can all help the youth in fulfilling their goals.

### **How does the new Children and Youth Program apply to the Lord's Youth Battalion?**

2 Nephi 13 (Isaiah 3)

4. And I will give children unto them to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

5. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor; the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable.

The Book of Mormon Institute Student Manuel states:

“The untrained and young who had no status in society will be appointed to rule in captivity over those listed in 2 Nephi 13:2–3.”

2. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient;

3. The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counselor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

The world, Babylon is training it's youth to rule over the adults, the wise and learned. Babylon is giving the youth more power in society than it has ever had before. If Satan is going to raise up youth leaders in Babylon so is the Lord going to raise up youth leaders in Zion. But I think that needs to be reworded. The Lord is hastening His work and is now gathering Israel. Part of His hastening the work is training up the youth to be leaders, to be strong in the testimony of Christ, to follow through with commitments and covenants they have and will make, to connect with Heaven, to establish strong relationships with the adults they work with, and to fight against Babylon now and not in ten or twenty years when they are grown and get around to it. If the Lord is hastening His work, the advisory is going to increase his own work and attacks against the children of Israel by creating a counterfeit to what God has already created.

In short, this is how we protect the eggs from being robbed from the nest.

### **What does “youth-led, adult supported” mean for parents?**

Of course this doesn't mean that we allow our youth to lead in our homes. Just as in the ward, the Bishop still holds keys to be a judge and preside over the ward, so does the father, with the mother at his side, hold keys to judge and preside over the family. This program is meant to be a compliment to the Family-centered, church-supported realignment that came along with preach my gospel. In our homes, we are to teach our youth to be leaders, help and support them in creating and following through with goals and keeping covenants. Many youth will be called to presidency and leadership positions and many if not all will be called on to minister with the Relief Society. We can recognize the importance of these callings. We can recognize that they are just as important as a calling might receive as an adult and not just see and treat it as an honorary position, training, or something just for fun. These are real callings; real responsibilities and they will be asked to account for their service just as you will be asked to account for how you support your youth in their calling. Many youth will be asked to help plan and carry out activities or teach lessons. Again, these are serious assignments and not just something fun or to help them feel loved and included. While these assignments can fulfill those things, they are assignments that have been given and, or that they have volunteered to do to help build the kingdom of God, to do their part in the work or salvation, and in gathering Israel.

### **Micah's Thoughts:**

This question is geared entirely to group one I mentioned above. This is talking entirely about church-run programs with children within specific age groups who belong to the Church of Jesus Christ at that specific time. To be youth-led, adult-supported is to have the youth gain the experience leading while the leaders facilitate their growth. This practice was/in done in many militaries around the world with new lieutenants or sergeants having a mature officer come into the platoon and help support that leader in his growth as a young leader in the military. Without trying to offend people, simply stating the doctrine, this procedure is a lot more conducive to the young men than to the young women because the young men, the deacon's quorum president and teacher's quorum president both hold keys over their quorums, which means they are entitled to revelation for their quorum members. This is why there are no more Young Men Presidents because the young men presidents held less keys and less authority than the actual deacon/teacher quorum presidents. This does not apply to the Young Women. The Young Women's leaders and the young women themselves hold no keys over anyone else.

This actually means nothing for parents for Fathers have keys over their kids completely separate from the Church programs. Just because the Church program says the church program is to run with the kids leading and the leaders supporting does not mean that is how a father and a mother should run their homes. Church programs are meant to augment what is already going on the home, not supersede, not replace and not to dictate how parents should rule in their homes. Once again, this situation is completely different from YM and YW because YMs are answering to keys and a good father as part of his parenting should foster an environment of obedience and compliance to the keys.

### **3. How does the realignment of the Bishop's responsibilities to be directly over the youth effect his focus in the Lord's Kingdom and how should this knowledge effect our focus in the Lord's Kingdom?**

### **Esther's Thoughts:**

3a.) General Handbook 7.1: “The bishop’s foremost responsibility is to the rising generation in the ward (the children, youth, and young single adults). To enable him to concentrate on this responsibility, he delegates many assignments (see 4.2.5).”

7.1.1: “The bishop is the ward’s primary spiritual leader. He sets an example by serving “with holiness of heart” (Mosiah 18:12). He teaches, uplifts, and inspires (see Matthew 20:28). He follows the principles of leadership in Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–46.”

3b.) Elder Quentin L. Cook: “You might ask, ‘Why is the bishop directed to spend so much time with the youth?’ The Lord has organized His Church to accomplish crucial priorities. Accordingly, the organization of His Church has a structure in which the bishop has a dual responsibility. He has doctrinal responsibility for the ward as a whole, but he also has specific doctrinal responsibility for the priests quorum.

“The young men who are priests and the young women of the same age are at a very important stage in their lives and development. During a short period of time, they make decisions that have significant lifelong implications. They determine whether they will qualify for the temple, serve a mission, strive to

be married in the temple, and prepare for their life’s work. These decisions, once made, have profound spiritual and practical implications for the remainder of their lives. Bishops, please know that a relatively short time spent with a young priest, young woman, or young adult can help them understand the power available to them through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It can provide a vision that will have a profound influence upon their entire life.” (“Bishops – Shepherds of the Lord’s Flock” April 2021)

Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley: “Tremendous are the burdens which they [bishops and branch presidents] carry, and I invite every member of the Church to do all that he or she can to lift the burden under which our bishops and branch presidents labor.

“We must pray for them. They need help as they carry their heavy loads. We can be more supportive and less dependent upon them. We can assist them in every way possible. We can thank them for all that they do for us. We are wearing them out in a short time by the burdens which we impose upon them” (“The Shepherds of Israel” October 2003).

### **Marlene's Thoughts:**

In the 2019 October General Conference the responsibilities of the Bishop in the ward were realigned to focus directly on the youth.

In this Conference President Nelson introduced the change in his talk, “Witnesses, Aaronic Priest Quorum, and Young Women Classes.”

“You will remember that I have invited the youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to enlist in the Lord’s youth battalion to participate in the greatest cause on earth today—the gathering of Israel. I issued this invitation to our youth because they are unusually gifted in reaching out to others and sharing what they believe in a convincing fashion. The cause of the gathering is an essential part of helping to prepare the world and its people for the Second Coming of the Lord.

In each ward, the Lord's youth battalion is led by a bishop, a dedicated servant of God. His first and foremost responsibility is to care for the young men and young women of his ward. The bishop and his counselors direct the work of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums and the Young Women classes in the ward."

Elder Cook, in his talk, "Adjustments to Strengthen Youth", explained this change.

First, curriculum has been strengthened and expanded to the home. Second, a children and youth program that includes exciting activities and personal development was presented just last Sunday... A third initiative is organizational changes to make youth a more significant focus of our bishops and other leaders. This focus must be spiritually powerful and help our youth become the youth battalion President Nelson has asked them to become.

These efforts, together with those announced during the last few years, are not isolated changes. Each of the adjustments is an integral part of an interlocking pattern to bless the Saints and prepare them to meet God.

One part of the pattern relates to the rising generation. Our youth are being asked to take more individual responsibility at younger ages—without parents and leaders taking over what youth can do for themselves.

One purpose for the changes I will now discuss is to strengthen Aaronic Priesthood holders, quorums, and quorum presidencies. These changes align our practice with Doctrine and Covenants 107:15, which reads, "The bishopric is the presidency of this [Aaronic] priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same."

It was then announced that Young Men presidencies would be discontinued and that the duties of the Bishop would realign so as to be the President over the Young Men and the Priest Quorum.

these adjustments will:

Help bishops and their counselors focus on their core responsibilities to the youth and Primary children.

Place the power and duties of the Aaronic Priesthood at the center of every young man's personal life and goals.

Motivate adult leaders to assist and mentor Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies in magnifying the power and authority of their office.

The Young Women would continue to have an adult Young Women Presidency but they would report directly to the Bishop and not a counselor and Continuing from Elder Cook, "... we recognize the strength that comes from having strong, engaged, and focused Young Women leaders who love and mentor, not taking over the roles of class presidencies but helping youth succeed in those roles.

No matter how Young Women classes are organized, *every class should have a class presidency!* It is by divine design that young women are called to lead in their youth.

The role and purpose of class presidencies have been strengthened and more clearly defined. The work of salvation is one of these significant responsibilities, particularly in the areas of ministering, missionary work, activation, and temple and family history work. Yes, this is how we gather Israel—a glorious work for all young women as members of the Lord’s youth battalion. (Beloved Daughters, Bonnie Cordon, 2019 October General Conference)

### **Micah’s Thoughts:**

The bishops’ realignment was simply a removal of callings- the middleman was removed. And it was because A) the middleman (i.e., YM president) held no keys and B) the person with the keys (i.e., the bishop) was burying his talent. The realignment also took place with the High Priests and Elders Quorum for the exact same reason. EQ presidencies hold keys while High Priest group leaders held none. What these changes were intended to do was to get people closer to the keys, more oriented by the keys, etc. It had nothing to do with changing the focus of the Church from adults to youth, rather this was a policy change that realigned people to “hear Him” and less “spirit-o-meters”. If one was familiar with the keys of the kingdom these changes would have come with shouts of Hallelujah, not shock and awe. Realignment is when something has fallen out of line and needs to be brought back to the way it should be. And the way it should be is always built around the keys of the kingdom which never change.

## **4. Why is the Lord's Youth Battalion and the realigned focus of the youth so important for these last days?**

### **Esther’s Thoughts:**

Pres. Nelson: “Think of this, my dear young brothers and sisters, right now I am preparing for the day when I will be required to give an accounting to the Prophet Joseph Smith, to President Brigham Young, and others—and ultimately to the Lord—about my stewardship as God’s prophet upon the earth today. I do not want to be asked, ‘Brother Nelson, why were you not more clear with the youth about their part in gathering Israel? Why were you not more bold in enlisting them to participate?’”

The stake YW counselor whom I work with said this to me just a couple of weeks ago: “The reason why the Church is focusing so hard on the youth, and the reason the Bishop is now directly involved with the youth, is because that’s the group where the Church is losing their membership... That is the group that is losing their testimony the fastest.” I was blown away, but at the same time I wasn’t surprised one bit. Babylon is alive and well on the Earth. It’s taking our children away from God, and what are we doing about it?

“Unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures, our prophet said... and how true is that? We know that these times of upheaval are meant to be. We know that this is the eleventh hour, that soon the wheat will be separated from the tares. Our youth are not tomorrow’s leaders; they are today’s leaders. And at the same time, they are the most vulnerable. I’d call that unprecedented for sure! What unprecedented measures are we taking as parents to ensure our children are equipped with what they need to battle the forces of the adversary from now until we are safe in Zion?”

## **FINAL THOUGHTS (If there is a need for them)**

I testify that the Lord's Youth Battalion is real, God is gathering His righteous children on Earth to gather Israel and prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ. Our children can be active participants in that great work, and we as their parents have a responsibility to see them in this light and to support them accordingly. I promise that as we do so, Heavenly Father will bless us and our children in these, the last days.

### **Marlene's Thoughts:**

Let's look at the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins to get an understanding of this. In 2 Nephi 13 we learn about the Chastening of the Daughters of Israel or in other words, the Five Foolish Virgins. The chapter lays out in detail the full extent to which they were foolish and unwise.

### **Nephi 13 (Isaiah 3)**

11. Wo unto the wicked, for they shall perish; for the reward of their hands shall be upon them!

12. And my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they who lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths.

### **Book of Mormon Institute Student Manuel**

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) interpreted 2 Nephi 13:12: “And so today, the undermining of the home and family is on the increase, with the devil anxiously working to displace the father as the head of the home and create rebellion among the children. The Book of Mormon describes this condition when it states ‘And my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.’ And then these words follow—and consider these words seriously when you think of those political leaders who are promoting birth control and abortion: ‘O my people, they who lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths.’ (2 Ne. 13:12.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 21).

15. What mean ye? Ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

16. Moreover, the Lord saith: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet—

24. And it shall come to pass, instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle, a rent; and instead of well set hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; burning instead of beauty.

25. Thy men shall fall by the sword and thy mighty in the war.

26. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall be desolate, and shall sit upon the ground.

### **Doctrine and Covenants 95:1**

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you—

**By 3 Nephi:14 (Isaiah:4)**, we see their redemption.

1. And in that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying: We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach.

In examining this verse, taking away their reproach in Old Testament times means that these women will be asking the men to take away the disgrace they have at not being married and not having children. In our modern day culture, a woman not having a husband is not disgraceful but actually something to be seen as honorable and liberating. The same can be said for not having children. To a feminist, the belief that having children only holds you back from fulfilling your “full potential”. Why then would this be so disgraceful to the women who had just lived through the chastening? One might think it is because now she is alone and has no one to care for her but as we read, they say, “we will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel.” Their care and sustenance is not then the problem. These women have just been chastened. They have been humbled. They have repented of the false traditions wrapped up in feminism and the world's/satan's plan for the family of God and are now ready to live according to the God's plan for the children of God. And what is that plan? It is the very plan that we all will be living in the New Jerusalem/Zion as it is laid out in “The Family, a Proclamation to the World” given in 1995.

“We Warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”

This was the root cause for all the calamities, wars, chastening that was previously mentioned; the violating of covenants, abuse of spouse and offspring, failing to fulfill family responsibility, and the disintegration of the family. When the daughters of Zion are willing to give up all else and pay every price to live up to their temple covenants and fulfill the plan the Savior's plan for the family, thus redeeming Israel, the branch of the Lord will then be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth will be excellent and comely.

2. In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious; the fruit of the earth excellent and comely to them that are escaped of Israel.

Nephi 3:5

5. Wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off, nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom.

Elder Eyring gave in the October 2020 General Conference titled, “Sisters in Zion”:

As the beloved daughters of Heavenly Father, and as the daughters of the Lord Jesus Christ in His kingdom, you will play a crucial part in the grand times ahead. We know that the Savior will come to a people who have been gathered and prepared to live as the people did in the city of Enoch. The people there were united in faith in Jesus Christ and had become so completely pure that they were taken up to heaven.

You sisters, your daughters, your granddaughters, and the women you have nurtured will be at the heart of creating that society of people who will join in glorious association with the Savior. You will be an essential force in the gathering of Israel and in the creation of a Zion people who will dwell in peace in the New Jerusalem.

The Lord has, through His prophets, made a promise to you. In the early days of the Relief Society, the Prophet Joseph Smith said to the sisters, “If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your *associates*.”

If the past is prologue, at the time of the Savior’s coming, the daughters who are deeply committed to their covenants with God will be more than half of those who are prepared to welcome Him when He comes.

But whatever the numbers, your contribution in creating unity among the people prepared for that Zion will be far greater than half.

So what is the conclusion to all of this? We have been asked to gather Israel and the Youth have been asked to do their part by joining the Lord's Youth Battalion, The youth program has changed so that its focus is on being youth-led, adult supported so that they can learn to be ready now to be a Zion people. The Bishop's responsibilities have realigned to focus on the youth which means that our focus should be on the nurturing of the youth. The general program of the church has changed to family centered, church supported so that again, our focus can be centered on the family and correctly raising and teaching the children. If we look at Isaiah, it is the five foolish virgins who are proud and consumed with the world. They are only redeemed when they put their pride, and the world behind them and focus entirely on the Lord's plan for the family. It is the five wise virgins who are focus on nurturing the youth, caring for the children of God, and gathering Israel. I would say that we have a whole lot of work ahead of us. We can't properly teach our children if we are not living properly ourselves and doing what the Lord has asked us to do; and fulfilling the mission for which we have been sent to this earth at this time. In the past few years there have been many many changes; much has been given and much is required of us. We can't ignore our responsibilities, say to ourselves, “all is well in Zion”, and then think that all will be well with the Lord. If we do, we too will find ourselves at the door, the Lord saying to us, “ye knew me not.”

How beautiful the gospel of Jesus Christ. How beautiful His plan for us. And, how beautiful the way we can clearly say He is in extreme detail guiding His people *today!* I love this topic because it is something that is happening in real time right now that we can all clearly see and all clearly participate in. It's not something that was prophesied and we are awaiting the day, it is *literally right now!* I know that President Nelson is His prophet on the earth today and has been called to lead and direct specifically for this day. No doubt in my mind about that. I know that we have a lot of work laid out before us and I pray that we will all fulfill our missions and do what we promised we would do and what we have been asked to do. And I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Micah's Thoughts:**

As I said in the last section, this realignment was a call back to the keys. Which living in our day, right now, it should be extremely obvious why this realignment was crucial and how integral an understanding of the keys of the kingdom is to truly understanding “hear Him”. Priestcraft abounds, false doctrine abound, evil is rising and is now being called good, progressive, shattering glass ceilings etc. We have to know and understand the keys of the kingdom before we can understand the pyramid of truth. And if we don’t we will be as those described by the Lord:

### **D&C 1:16**

16 They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.

Battalions belong to armies and armies have sergeants, lieutenants, generals, and if every man and woman “walked in their own way” and “after their own gods” the army would be completely useless. We have to know who to listen to as they listen to those above them and they listen to those above them and as that man listens to the Lord themselves. When President Nelson said we need to learn how to “hear Him”, meaning the Lord, and made these realignments in the Church, it was to get people refocused on the keys, the pyramid of truth, etc.

### **D&C 101:14**

14 And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people;

President Nelson once again in begging us to learn how to “hear Him” and making these realignments was to get us attached to the keys of the kingdom for to hear and heed the words of the Lord’s servants and the Lord’s prophets and apostles, is to hear Him. It is crazy, maybe a little bit ironic, that this call to repentance and realignment of the prophet is also what exacerbated and exploded verse 16, people walking their own ways after their own gods i.e., Spirit-o-meters.

Despite what the world does, however, we must remained fixed on the keys and be submissive to them or we will not find ourselves in the Lord’s battalion, youth or otherwise.

### **D&C 105: 35-37**

There has been a day of calling, but the time has come for a day of choosing; and let those be chosen that are worthy. And it shall be manifest unto my servant, by the voice of the Spirit, those that are chosen; and they shall be sanctified; And inasmuch as they follow the counsel which they receive, they shall have power after many days to accomplish all things pertaining to Zion.