



OCTOBER 2026 GENERAL CONFERENCE • SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The Sculpting of Our Souls

Sister Tamara W. Runia • First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Words to remember

- *“Let’s choose Christ, who can heal the wounds of this world while carving out room for joy!”*
- *“Consider this: Christ’s work in your life and His love for you are bigger than your present story. And He can fix what feels badly broken.”*

In Sister Tamara W. Runia’s own words, from the talk.

Sister Tamara W. Runia, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, said she loves fixing things: knots in shoelaces and necklaces, and stains. Some even call her “the stain whisperer.” It’s natural, she said, to get frustrated when something comes along that we cannot fix.

Thirteen years ago, her oldest son, Ryan, woke up on a Monday, kissed his wife and four young children goodbye, and left for work. A few hours later he collapsed and died from a heart condition no one knew he had. The next day was his two-year-old daughter Piper’s birthday. As the family lit the candles and sang, Piper looked for her dad, and Sister Runia realized this was something I would not be able to fix.

She shared a scripture that changed how she sees her life. Joseph Smith was in Liberty Jail, pleading for a break. Instead the Lord told him, “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.” Sister Runia said experience is valuable, and the only way to get it is to go through it. There isn’t another way. Earth is like a laboratory where we learn to become like Christ.

She admitted she grew up thinking the gospel was like a big umbrella. If you keep the commandments, pay tithing, and live the Word of Wisdom, you’ll be blessed. Those are true promises! But she learned we are all going to get rained on, sometimes hard. “The gospel isn’t the umbrella; it’s the solid rock we’re standing on during the storm—that ‘sure foundation ... whereon if men build they cannot fall.’”

When an angel asked Nephi a hard question, Nephi said, “I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.” Sister Runia said God’s love has moved her from asking why to saying, “I know that God loves me, so what is supposed to be happening here?” At Ryan’s funeral, she told the family she didn’t understand why this happened. “But let me be clear: Not understanding is not the same as not believing.”

She taught that each of our stories is personal, so we don't have to compare our lives with others, and purposeful, because our suffering means something. "It's not a detour from the path; it gives purpose to our path."

At the funeral, Ryan's seven-year-old son, Jack, gave a Primary talk he and his dad had worked on. He loves Lego bricks and follows the instructions, just as Heavenly Father has a plan that guides us. His mom asked what he would do without the picture on the box. Jack said he would still stick to the plan, "Yes, because you can trust the one who designed it, and it always turns out."

The day before he died, Ryan was set apart as elders quorum president. He visited a neighbor whose family had just left him and told him, "You can curse God and blame Him, or you can turn to Him and let Him heal you." Sister Runia said, "We all have a choice right now. Let's choose Christ, who can heal the wounds of this world while carving out room for joy!" She also said, "Consider this: Christ's work in your life and His love for you are bigger than your present story. And He can fix what feels badly broken."

She ended with her brother Kent's college art class. He had to sculpt a clay bust of himself. The eyes looked terrible, but he didn't want help. After struggling alone, he finally humbled himself and asked. The teacher carved so fast and deep it startled him, but within minutes the eyes came to life. The piece was still uniquely me, Kent said, but a master's hand had shaped it.

Sister Runia said a sculpting is happening in each of our souls. The Savior waits for an invitation before He goes to work, and sometimes His work feels hard. But "God is shaping us into something only He knows we can become." One day we will thank Him for all of it, because we shall see him as he is, and we shall be like him.

Scripture to look up: Helaman 5:12. Jesus Christ is the sure foundation, the solid rock we stand on during every storm.

Let's talk about it

What did this talk teach us about the Savior? What is one small thing our family can do this week?

Kid-friendly summary in our own words · Read or watch the full talk: [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2026/10/13runia](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2026/10/13runia)