



Stay on the Lord's Side of the Line

*The Lord has given us commandments so that
we can resist evil and find happiness.*

From the Life of George Albert Smith

George Albert Smith's grandfather George A. Smith served for many years in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and in the First Presidency as a counselor to Brigham Young. George Albert Smith often repeated the counsel his grandfather used to give to his family: "There is a line of demarcation well defined between the Lord's territory and the devil's territory. If you will stay on the Lord's side of the line you will be under his influence and will have no desire to do wrong; but if you cross to the devil's side of that line one inch you are in the tempter's power and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly because you will have lost the Spirit of the Lord."

George Albert Smith said that he used this counsel throughout his life to guide his choices: "When I have been tempted sometimes to do a certain thing, I have asked myself, 'Which side of the line am I on?' If I determined to be on the safe side, the Lord's side, I would do the right thing every time. So when temptation comes think prayerfully about your problem and the influence of the Lord will aid you to decide wisely. There is safety for us only on the Lord's side of the line."¹ [See suggestion 1 on page 199.]

Teachings of George Albert Smith

Staying on the Lord's side of the line requires strict obedience to the commandments.

All safety, all righteousness, all happiness are on the Lord's side of the line. If you are keeping the commandments of God by observing the Sabbath day, you are on the Lord's side of the line. If you attend to your secret prayers and your family prayers, you are on the Lord's side of the line. If you are grateful for food and express that gratitude to God, you are on the Lord's side of the line. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you are on the Lord's side of the line. If you are honest in your dealing with your fellow men, you are on the Lord's side of the line. If you observe the Word of Wisdom, you are on the Lord's side of the line. And so I might go on through the Ten Commandments and the other commandments that God has given for our guidance and say again, all that enriches our lives and makes us happy and prepares us for eternal joy is on the Lord's side of the line. Finding fault with the things that God has given to us for our guidance is not on the Lord's side of the line.² [See suggestion 2 on page 199.]

[The Lord has said]: "I cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;" not with the least degree of allowance [D&C 1:31]. Why? Because He knows that if we partake of sin we lose a blessing that we would enjoy if we did not forsake the pathway that leads to that blessing.³

Every once in a while we hear somebody say, "Oh, I wouldn't be so particular. The Lord is not going to be very severe with us if we just go part way." The one who is talking that way is already on the devil's side of the line, and you do not want to listen to him because if you do, you may be misled. Nobody talks that way who has the Spirit of the Lord. The Lord himself has said that we must keep his commandments: "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated." (D&C 130:20.) The gospel of Jesus Christ is to teach us how to earn that blessing.⁴



“The revelations of the Lord to us in this day and age of the world, are but the sweet music of the voice of our Father in heaven in His mercy to us.”

Our loving Father in Heaven gives us commandments to help us find happiness.

The Lord, in His kindness, seeing the attitude of His children, and knowing that they would need guidance, gave to us the Ten Commandments, and other commandments that have been given from time to time, to help us to find happiness. You observe people running to and fro in the world, seeking happiness but not finding it. If they would only pause long enough to accept the Lord’s advice happiness would follow, but they will find it in no other way.⁵

When I was a child I recognized, or thought I did, that the commandments of the Lord were His laws and regulations for my guidance. I thought I recognized in the disobedience to those laws that punishment would follow, and as a child I presume I may have felt that the Lord had so arranged affairs and so ordained matters

in this life that I must obey certain laws or swift retribution would follow. But as I grew older I have learned the lesson from another viewpoint, and now to me the laws of the Lord, so-called, the counsels contained in the Holy Scriptures, the revelations of the Lord to us in this day and age of the world, are but the sweet music of the voice of our Father in heaven in His mercy to us. They are but the advice and counsel of a loving parent, who is more concerned in our welfare than earthly parents can be, and consequently that which at one time seemed to bear the harsh name of law to me is now the loving and tender advice of an all-wise Heavenly Father. And so I say it is not hard for me to believe that it is best for me to keep the commandments of God.⁶

All the happiness that has come to me and mine has been the result of trying to keep the commandments of God and of living to be worthy of the blessings that he has promised those who honor him and keep his commandments.⁷

If we will follow the advice and counsel that the Lord has given, our pathway will be one of happiness. It will be a pathway, perhaps not of ease and comfort always, but in the end it will terminate in the presence of our Heavenly Father, and glory, immortality and eternal lives will be our portion.⁸ [See suggestion 3 on page 199.]

**The adversary tries to lead us astray
with his deceptions and subtleties.**

There are two influences in the world today and have been from the beginning. One is an influence that is constructive, that radiates happiness and that builds character. The other influence is one that destroys, turns men into demons, tears down and discourages. We are all susceptible to both. The one comes from our Heavenly Father and the other comes from the source of evil that has been in the world from the beginning seeking to bring about the destruction of the human family.⁹

We will all be tempted; no man is free from temptation. The adversary will use every means possible to deceive us; he tried to do that with the Savior of the world without success. He has tried it on many other men who have possessed divine authority, and

sometimes he finds a weak spot and the individual loses what might have been a great blessing if he had been faithful.¹⁰

A man once said to me—or remarked in a place where I happened to be—“Why, these people here seem to think I am full of the devil, but I am not.” And I said to him, “My brother, did you ever know anybody that was full of the devil and knew it?” That is one of the tricks of the devil: To get possession of you and keep you from knowing it. And that is one of our difficulties.¹¹

The Prophet Nephi, hundreds of years ago, saw what would occur, that the people were to contend with one another and deny the power of the Holy Ghost and the Holy One of Israel, and were to teach for doctrine the commandments of men. An influence is in the world today trying to make people believe that by their own intelligence and by their own power they can gain eternal life. Let me . . . read from Nephi:

“And there shall also be many which shall say, Eat, drink and be merry, nevertheless fear God, he will justify in committing a little sin.”

I want you to note that: “He will justify in committing a little sin.” That cunning adversary knowing that if he could only get a man or woman to do a little wrong, that far they had gone into his territory, that far they were in his power.

“Nevertheless, fear God, he will justify in committing a little sin, yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this. And do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the Kingdom of God.” [2 Nephi 28:8.]

Isn't that just exactly what the devil says to the children of men today as plainly as it is written here? Oh, commit a little sin, that won't do any harm, lie a little, that won't do any particular damage, the Lord will forgive that and you will only be beaten with a few stripes and at last you shall be saved in the kingdom of God. That is what he says to the man or the woman who has been taught the Word of Wisdom when he says, oh, drink a little tea, that won't hurt you; use a little tobacco, that won't make any difference; a little liquor won't

do any harm. These are little things; he always does it a little at a time, not all at once. That is what I would like us to remember. . . . It is these insignificant insidious whisperings that betray mankind and that place us in the power of the devil. . . .

And Nephi says further:

“And others will he pacify and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say, All is well in Zion; yea Zion prospereth, all is well; and thus the devil cheateth their souls.”

Now, I want you to note that: “And thus the devil cheateth their souls and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.” [2 Nephi 28:21.] And that is the way he does it, that’s exactly the way he does it. He does not come and grab you bodily and take you into his territory, but he whispers, “Do this little evil,” and when he succeeds in that, another little evil and another, and, to use the expression quoted, “He cheateth their souls.” That’s what he does. He makes you believe that you are gaining something when you are losing. So it is every time we fail to observe a law of God or keep a commandment, we are being cheated, because there is no gain in this world or in the world to come but by obedience to the law of our Heavenly Father.

. . . That peculiar suggestion, “And he leadeth them *carefully* away down to hell” is significant, that is his method. Men and women in the world today are subject to that influence, and they are being drawn here and there, and that whispering is going on and they do not understand what the Lord desires them to do, but they continue in the territory of the evil one, subject to his power where the Spirit of the Lord will not go.

He says further: . . .

“And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them, I am no devil, for there is none; and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.” [2 Nephi 28:22.]

Now, my brethren and sisters, that is the condition of the world today. Nephi could not have stated it plainer if he had been right here in the world now. And the adversary is at work, and because our Heavenly Father desired to preserve his children from the evil

of that teaching and of that belief he sent the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, into the world, commissioned him with divine authority, organized His Church, and began again to teach the truth to the children of men, that they might be led from the error of their ways.¹²

We must learn to overcome our passions, our evil tendencies. We must learn to resist temptations. That is why we are here, and in order that we may more perfectly do that, the gospel has been restored to the earth, and we have been made partakers of it, and we have the strength that comes to us as a result of the power of the Holy Ghost. We not only have the resistance of an ordinary individual, with the limitations that such an individual has who has not the knowledge of the truth—we have equal resistance with him, and in addition the resistance which comes from knowing the truth and knowing the purpose of our being.¹³ [See suggestion 4 on pages 199–200.]

**We can resist evil by choosing to subject ourselves
to the influence of the Lord.**

I remember a number of years ago a good man who was at that time chairman of the board of control of the Universalist Church of America. He came here to visit [Salt Lake City] and attended two of our Sunday schools. In one of the [children's] classes he became much interested. Eventually, when the [class] was about to close, the superintendent said, "Wouldn't you like to say a few words to the [class]?" . . . He said, "I would like to say a few words." He said, "If I could only live in the atmosphere that I found in that little . . . class in this Sabbath school this morning, I couldn't help but be a good man." [See suggestion 5 on page 200.]

I have thought of that a good many times. We choose carefully the atmosphere that we breathe, that we may live in health. But sometimes, in our carelessness, we place ourselves in subjection to immoral influences that destroy our resistance of evil, and we are led to do things that we ought not to do and would not do if under the influence of the Lord. If we would only be humble, if we would only be prayerful, if we would only live in such a way that each hour of our lives we could truthfully say, "Father in heaven, I am willing and anxious to do what thou wouldst have me do,"



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our lives every day would be enriched as we go through this earth experience.¹⁴

We choose where we will be. God has given us our agency. He will not take it from us, and if I do that which is wrong and get into the devil’s territory, I do it because I have the will and power to do it. I cannot blame anybody else, and if I determine to keep the commandments of God and live as I ought to live and stay on the Lord’s side of the line I do it because I ought to do it, and I will receive my blessing for it. It will not be the result of what somebody else may do.¹⁵

How careful we as Latter-day Saints ought to be to live every day of our lives that we may be influenced by the power of the Lord, and that we may be able to turn aside from those things that have a tendency to break down our power to earn the celestial kingdom.¹⁶

See that your feet are planted upon the rock. See that you learn the desires of the Master toward you, and, knowing those desires, see to it that you keep His laws and commands. See to it that the purity of your lives shall entitle you to the companionship of the Holy Spirit, because if you are pure and virtuous and upright, the evil one will have no power to destroy you.¹⁷

I pray that we examine ourselves and find out which side of the line we are on; and if we are on the Lord's side, stay there, because that means eternal happiness in the companionship of the best men and women that have lived upon the earth.

If we have slipped in any way, if we have been careless; if we have listened to the tempter and gone across the line to partake of those things that the world thinks are so desirable and the Lord has said are not good for us, let us as quickly as possible get back on the other side, ask the Lord to forgive us our foolishness, and then with his help go on living the life that means eternal happiness.¹⁸

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–vii.

1. Read “From the Life of George Albert Smith” (page 191) and Moroni 7:10–19. How do you know when you are “on the Lord’s side of the line”? What can we do to help each other stay on the Lord’s side of the line?
2. In the first paragraph on page 192, President Smith names several commandments that we should obey to stay on the Lord’s side of the line. What other standards has the Lord given us to help us stay on His side of the line?
3. As you read the section that begins on page 193, consider how you might use President Smith’s teachings to help someone who feels that the commandments are too restrictive.
4. As you review pages 194–97, look for the tactics of Satan that President Smith describes, and think about times when you have seen evidence of these tactics. How can we help young

people recognize and overcome them? How does “knowing the purpose of our being” (page 197) help us resist temptation?

5. Think about how the story on page 197 might apply to you. What are some of the places or circumstances in which you feel no desire to do evil? What can we do to create such an atmosphere in our homes? in our workplaces? in our communities? in our personal lives?

Related Scriptures: Matthew 4:1–11 (including excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation in the footnotes); James 4:7; 1 John 5:3–4; Alma 13:27–28; Helaman 5:12; Doctrine and Covenants 82:8–10

Teaching help: “Questions written on the chalkboard before class will help learners begin to think about topics even before the lesson begins” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, 93).

Notes

1. “A Faith Founded upon Truth,” *Deseret News*, June 17, 1944, Church section, 9.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 118.
3. *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, sel. Preston Nibley (1948), 198; address given Nov. 4, 1945, in Washington, D.C.
4. “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1947, 690.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1941, 25.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1911, 43–44.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1949, 87.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 36.
9. “A Faith Founded upon Truth,” 9.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 117.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1948, 179.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 1918, 39–41.
13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1926, 102.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1929, 23.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1932, 27.
16. In Conference Report, Oct. 1926, 103.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1906, 48.
18. “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God,” 691.