

Lighting Our Children's Path

with Gospel Standards

By Jan Pinborough
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Our daughter got home from girls' camp bursting to tell us about her first midnight hike. Dressed in their sweats and PJs, the girls had followed the beam of their leader's flashlight as it cut through the darkness of the thick Tennessee woods. There were rocks, logs, and ravines—not to mention a pretty large population of raccoons, skunks, and bats—and even a distant coyote's howl. When they reached a clearing by the lake, they all rested under the starry sky before heading back to their tents. So many things could have tripped them up, but everyone was safe. Their hike was a brilliant success.

Today's children are taking their earthly journey when every day the world is becoming a little less filtered, a little cruder and more contentious. Morally, it's a very murky time in the world's history. And many are losing their way.

So parents need to be armed with a spiritual equivalent of the camp leader's flashlight—the standards and teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Gospel standards give children safety, security, and direction. They help them find their way to the temple. In the words of the Psalmist, they give them “a lamp unto [their] feet, and a light unto [their] path” (Psalm 119:105).

Here are six ways we can light our children's paths with gospel standards:





By diligently teaching our children gospel standards, we can help them find their way in an ever-darkening world.

WALKING ALONGSIDE OUR YOUTH

"I have a grandson who once asked me to go with him to a popular but inappropriate movie. I told him I wasn't old enough to see that film. He was puzzled until his grandmother explained to him that the rating system by age didn't apply to Grandpa. He came back to me and said, 'I get it now, Grandpa. You're never going to be old enough to see that movie, are you?' And he was right!

"Besides showing youth the way by example, we lead them by understanding their hearts and walking alongside them on the gospel path."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation," *Ensign*, May 2010, 95.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOLLIE HIBBERT

PART OF OUR CONVERSATION TODAY

“The world will teach our children if we do not, and children are capable of learning all the world will teach them at a very young age. What we want them to know five years from now needs to be part of our conversation with them today.”

Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, “Stay on the Path,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 9.

1. Make the Standards Your Own

We can only share a light that we already have. Our children watch us with unblinking eyes, and they know when our commitment to gospel standards is genuine.

Studying “My Gospel Standards” and *For the Strength of Youth* are good ways to begin. Evaluating needed changes can make our flashlight’s beam more powerful and reliable.

2. Be Aware

A revelation to the Church in 1838 urges: “Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations” (D&C 115:5).

Before we arise in the morning, we must be awake. Being awake implies being aware. We can’t be naive about the temptations our

children face. We need to be aware of trends and technologies.

But children must feel safe before they will talk to us about how things really are at school and among their friends. Sometimes it might feel natural to react with alarm. But if we respond instead by listening carefully and asking the child about his or her feelings, we build trust. Then our child will more likely see us as an ally in dealing with challenges.

3. Begin Early

Gospel standards bless, empower, and protect children, now and throughout their lives, and the best time to begin teaching them is early on, when our children are eager to learn from us and less susceptible to peer pressure.



4. Make Them Part of Family Culture

Talk about gospel standards. Celebrate them. Memorize them. Even sing them!

Cara Kennedy of Indiana, USA, hung a “My Gospel Standards” poster at eye level in her home so her children would see it often and learn the standards from a young age. Eventually she wrote a song about the standards, which includes the words, “When people say, ‘Why do you do this?’ When people say, ‘Why don’t you do that?’ I stand up tall and simply say, ‘These are my gospel standards!’” Some of Sister Kennedy’s nieces and nephews have also learned the song, and when they sing it, they shout that last line and throw their fists in the air!

5. Focus on Meaning and Purpose

Each gospel standard is rooted in eternal principles, such as the sanctity of the body and spirit. Each one leads toward the temple and is protective and empowering. As Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said of covenants, each one “elevates us beyond limits of our own perspective and power. It is like the difference between plodding through a muddy field and soaring through the skies in a supersonic jet.”¹

Living gospel standards helps us in our striving to be the kind of person Christ is. Ultimately, they lead us toward “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).



CHOOSING HEAVENLY FATHER’S PATH

“God knows something we don’t—things that are beyond our capacity to comprehend! Our Father in Heaven is an eternal being whose experience, wisdom, and intelligence are infinitely greater than ours. Not only that, but He is also eternally loving, compassionate, and focused on one blessed goal: to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life [see Moses 1:39].

“In other words, He not only *knows* what is best for you; He also anxiously *wants you to choose* what is best for you.

“. . . Doesn’t it make sense to embrace and follow His commandments, even the ones that appear difficult? Should we not cherish the light posts He has given that guide us through the darkness and the trials of mortality? They mark the way back to our heavenly home! By choosing Heavenly Father’s path, you lay a divine foundation for your personal progress . . . that will bless you throughout your life.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Living the Gospel Joyful,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 121.

My Gospel Standards

I will follow Heavenly Father's plan for me.

I will remember my baptismal covenant
and listen to the Holy Ghost.

I will choose the right.
I know I can repent when I make a mistake.

I will be honest with Heavenly Father, others, and myself.

I will use the names of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ reverently.
I will not swear or use crude words.

I will do those things on the Sabbath that will help me feel
close to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

I will honor my parents
and do my part to strengthen my family.

I will keep my mind and body sacred and pure,
and I will not partake of things that are harmful to me.

I will dress modestly to show respect for
Heavenly Father and myself.

I will only read and watch things that are
pleasing to Heavenly Father.

I will only listen to music that is pleasing to Heavenly Father.

I will seek good friends and treat others kindly.

I will live now to be worthy to go to the temple
and do my part to have an eternal family.

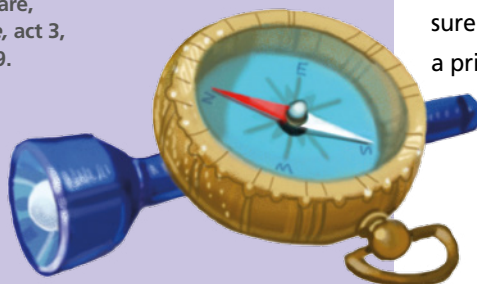
I AM A CHILD OF GOD

I know Heavenly Father loves me, and I love Him.
I can pray to Heavenly Father anytime, anywhere.
I am trying to remember and follow Jesus Christ.

Timeless Standards

“Virtue is bold,
and goodness never
fearful.”

William Shakespeare,
Measure for Measure, act 3,
scene 1, line 199.



6. Have a Monthly Standards Family Home Evening

Family discussions and role-playing can help children be brave and unashamed in living gospel standards and becoming a light unto the world. Consider these resources for upcoming family home evening lessons: “My Gospel Standards” poster (left); “Stand for the Right” poster (right, also page 20 of this month’s *Friend*); and “Aim for the Best” (page 24 of this month’s *Friend*). Rather than compare clothing, music, and media with what others are doing, we can compare with what is truly virtuous, lovely, and praiseworthy.

Lesson Idea: Discuss the different meanings of the word *standard*: (1) a banner carried at the top of a pole to serve as a rallying point; (2) a structure serving as a base or support; (3) something established as an example or a rule for the measure of quantity, weight, value, or quality; (4) a means of determining what a thing should be; (5) having recognized and permanent value.² ■

NOTES

1. “Prepare for the Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 49.
2. See *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “standard.”



WANT MORE TEACHING IDEAS?

Go to lds.org/go/standardsE815 to find a treasure trove of stories and activities, including a printable “My Gospel Standards” poster,

C.L.E.A.N. language cards, and dozens of other teaching ideas on each of the gospel standards.

I can stand for the right
by choosing . . .

Good books

Good friends

Good music

Good videos and
other media

Good words

Honesty

Kindness

Modesty

Respect

I can follow Jesus Christ!

STAND

for the

RIGHT

*Our prophet has some words for you,
And these are the words: "Be true, be true."
At work or at play, in darkness or light,
Be true, be true, and stand for the right.
(Children's Songbook, 159)*

