



**By Elder
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Choosing Right | WHEN THE WORLD IS WRONG

As a young officer in the Belgian Air Force, I was the only member of the Church in all the armed forces of my country—army and navy included! I was soon grateful that I had been taught that righteous standards are not to be rationalized away, especially in times of increased wickedness.

My first assignment to an air force base presented me with ample opportunity to participate in behavior I knew was wrong. Shortly after my arrival, a welcome party was scheduled for the officers' mess. I knew alcoholic beverages would be served, so I decided to visit with the commanding officer about the party. I thanked him for the welcome and then mentioned that I didn't drink alcohol. He looked surprised and asked if I had a health problem. I told him that as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I believed in what we call "the Word of Wisdom." I explained this law of health to him and told him that I obeyed it.

The commander asked questions about the Church and why the Word of Wisdom was revealed in modern times. The conversation became a gospel lesson and lasted much longer

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than I had expected.

"I respect your convictions and think they are wise," he told me. "I will see that a jar of orange juice is placed next to the glasses of beer and other alcoholic beverages."

When I entered the officers' mess a few days later for the welcome party, to my happy surprise a jar of orange juice was sitting on the counter. As it turned out, several officers joined me in drinking juice.

Being righteous when we are surrounded by unrighteous influences is a challenge we all face. Given that reality, what can we do to prepare for—and pass—the test of living righteously in a wicked world?

Strength from Revelation

One way to prepare for this test is to seek strength through revelation—both personal revelation and revelation from prophets, seers, and revelators. Revelation is a Liahona, or compass, that gives us daily guidance, helping us make correct decisions by deepening our understanding of the Lord's will in our lives. Revelation gives us true knowledge of "things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24). The



Bible Dictionary tells us that “without revelation, all would be guesswork, darkness, and confusion.”¹

Personal revelation often includes insights into specific ways we can more fully follow the Savior. These insights safeguard and guide us, help us master our thoughts and desires, and strengthen us to live in conformity with the commandments.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) declared, “The word of God, as found in the scriptures, in the words of living prophets, and in personal revelation, has the power to fortify the Saints and arm them with the Spirit so they can resist evil, hold fast to the good, and find joy in this life.”²

Modern revelation confirms earlier revelation. I intentionally use the words *modern* and *earlier*, not the words *new* or *ancient*. For



many people, *ancient* means “does not apply to me anymore.” The Lord, however, is eternal; likewise, His word is eternal and does not change, regardless of when it is revealed.

The Old Testament, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Book of Mormon all detail God’s dealings with *earlier* prophets, but they establish a foundation of righteousness that will never change. The testaments, covenants, and lessons contained in these sacred books have application in our time and help us hold fast to the iron rod.

The Large Impact of Small Sins

Today the word *discriminate* has been co-opted by those who would have us believe that *discrimination* is a bad thing. But we all discriminate on a daily basis whenever we make a choice. Living righteously in a wicked world requires that we not be afraid to make *right* choices.

“Many of us are fearful of what our peers will say, that we will be looked upon with disdain and criticized if we stand for what is right,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008). “But I remind you that ‘wickedness never was happiness’ (Alma 41:10). . . . Evil never was happiness. Sin never was happiness. Happiness lies in the power and the love and the sweet simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”³

We know that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for grievous sexual sins, but we may be unaware that their refusal to discriminate against lesser sins also contributed to their destruction. The Old Testament warns:

“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, *pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.*

“And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good” (Ezekiel 16:49–50; emphasis added).

We also can be destroyed by committing small sins. I could have accepted a drink of alcohol—a seemingly small sin—with the other air force officers. But keeping the Word of Wisdom helped me avoid larger temptations

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and sins, such as when I was later invited to accompany my fellow officers to a bar located off base. Instead, I chose a better environment, and I spent my free time with true friends who helped me to be my best.

The gospel was the answer, guidance from the Spirit was the source of my strength, and obedience to the commandments was the confirmation of my faith in the Savior.

Making a Difference

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has illustrated well the conditions in which we live and our responsibility as Latter-day Saints to make a difference in the world:

“In the Church, we often state the couplet: ‘Be in the world but not of the world.’ As we

observe television shows that make profanity, violence, and infidelity commonplace and even glamorous, we often wish we could lock out the world in some way and isolate our families from it all. . . .

“Perhaps we should state the couplet . . . as two separate admonitions. First, ‘*Be in the world.*’ Be involved; be informed. Try to be understanding and tolerant and to appreciate diversity. Make meaningful contributions to society through service and involvement. Second, ‘*Be not of the world.*’ Do not follow wrong paths or bend to accommodate or accept what is not right.”

Elder Ballard added that as Latter-day Saints, we “need to influence more than we are influenced. We should work to stem the tide of sin and evil instead of passively being swept along by it. We each need to help solve the problem rather than avoid or ignore it.”⁴

I testify that as we seek personal revelation, keep our eye on the Lord’s anointed, hold fast to righteous standards, and strive to make a difference through our example and influence, we will find joy in this life and in the next. ■

NOTES

1. Bible Dictionary, 762.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 80.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 222.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “The Effect of Television,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 80.