

GET Informed GET INVOLVED

In today's world, Latter-day Saints need to become well informed so they can speak up and engage intelligently in causes that concern them.

The news article stuck with you. You couldn't shake thinking about it on the drive to work. During lunch. On the way back home. It wouldn't leave your mind.

It was only a brief article about the good things volunteers do throughout your city. According to the article, volunteers make a huge difference in after-school programs, the city library, the local food bank, hospitals, the homeless shelter. And the benefits of volunteering, the article explained, include feeling valued, becoming more sensitive to others, and gaining a deeper sense of purpose in your daily life.

You've been praying for a way to better engage your children in the work of salvation.

The article stated that one area in need of help was the community center. This was the very same building your kids took dance classes in when they were younger. The thought occurs: this could be the perfect place for you and your family to lend a hand.

After all, your son has an Eagle Scout project he's still looking to plan. And your daughter is working on her Personal Progress. Some online research and a few phone calls later, you and your family have learned enough that you're motivated to step in and help.



It's amazing how attuned we can become to making a difference when we have a little timely information. However, we can't choose to make a difference when we don't know what's going on around us in the first place. With solid, reliable information helping us make wise decisions, the difference we make may be in community service, political involvement, or simply helping others become better informed.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) encouraged all of us to be well informed: “Let there be good magazines about the house, those which are produced by the Church and by others, which will stimulate [your children’s] thoughts to ennobling concepts. Let them read a good family newspaper that they may know what is going on in the world without being exposed to the debasing advertising and writing so widely found.”¹

How to Be Informed

“The exaltation and happiness of any community,” declared the Prophet Joseph Smith, “goes hand in hand with the knowledge possessed by the people.”²

We all live in several communities. Local communities—our neighborhoods, towns, and cities—often pose a different set of challenges and opportunities than those posed by our national community and the world at large. Getting informed about events in each of these communities can sometimes be a challenge in itself. But it is a challenge even the busiest among us cannot ignore.

Our Church leaders are good examples of staying current on local, national, and world events. In addition to traveling extensively and being constantly in touch with local area leaders, the General Authorities and general officers of the Church stay informed by reading widely. One need only peruse some of the most recent general



conference talks to notice the variety of sources, both printed and online, that the speakers have consulted.

Following the example of our leaders, we can

become informed by seeking out a variety of trustworthy, reputable, and responsible news sources whose stories prove to be consistently reliable. We also need to consider what motivates the organization producing the news. Does the organization have anything to gain by providing false or misleading information?

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said:

“Never in the history of the world have we had easier access to more information—some of it true, some of it false, and much of it partially true.

“Consequently, never in the history of the world has it been more important to learn how to correctly discern between truth and error.”³

As we study reliable sources, we will become familiar with multiple, even opposing, points of view. Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles quoted from a Pennsylvania newspaper: “The man who cannot listen to an argument which opposes his views either has a weak position or is a weak defender of it. No opinion that cannot stand discussion or criticism is worth holding. And it has been wisely said that the man who knows only half of any question is worse off than the man who knows nothing of it. He is not only one sided, but his partisanship soon turns him into an intolerant and a fanatic. In general it is true that nothing which cannot stand up under discussion and criticism is worth defending.”⁴

As we educate ourselves on issues and decide a position to take, it’s important to seek the Lord’s will. Once we have studied an issue thoroughly—including the scriptures and the words of our leaders—we can then pray about our decision with confidence that the Lord will guide us. The Savior told Oliver Cowdery, “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right” (D&C 9:8).

Why Should I Care?

The prophets have been warning us of troubling trends in our society. President Thomas S. Monson has declared, “Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it’s growing ever wider.”⁵ Beyond the immediate concern we have for ourselves and our families, why do we need to be mindful of these trends?

Answers come as we study scriptures related to individual rights, government, and civic involvement. For example, in his last act as king, Mosiah taught his people that

the opportunity to live in a land of liberty comes with the responsibility that each citizen bear the burden of government, “that every man might bear his part” (Mosiah 29:34). In order to responsibly “bear our part,” we must know what’s going on in the world.

Our involvement is both a privilege and an obligation. Let us remember the statement often attributed to Edmund Burke: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men [or women] do nothing.”

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What Can I Do?

One of the most powerful activities in any democratic society is persuading others. Indeed, seeking to influence and shape opinions about civic issues is an essential aspect of the political process. Abraham Lincoln understood the power of shaping public opinion. “He who molds public sentiment,” he said, “goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions.”⁶

The Lord told us through the Prophet Joseph Smith that “men should be anxiously engaged in a

good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness” (D&C 58:27).

This is one reason the First Presidency regularly encourages Church members to get involved in civic and political activities, reminding us that “principles compatible with the gospel may be found in the platforms of the various political parties.”⁷

There are many things we can do to get involved, such as voting, attending caucuses and other political meetings, volunteering at our local precincts on election day, and running for office. In all these activities, we will be most effective when we are well informed and speak up.

In many countries, free speech is a constitutionally protected right. We can say just about anything we want, and many do. However, as disciples of Christ, what we say and how we say it ought to be tempered by Christlike characteristics such as charity, brotherly kindness, and respect.

Serving in Our Communities

Two years ago the First Presidency sent a letter encouraging Latter-day Saints in Utah to participate in political party caucuses.⁸ The response was a huge increase in participation in both of the major parties. Auditoriums were filled beyond capacity in precincts that a few years previously could have fit attendees around a conference table.

As the ways of the world become increasingly distant from the Lord's ideals, members of the Church will find themselves needing to speak up on issues of common concern. President Gordon B. Hinckley warned that a small minority may "make their voices heard until those in our legislatures may come to believe that what they say represents the will of the majority." He reminded us that "we are not likely to get that which we do not speak up for.

"Let our voices be heard. I hope they will not be shrill voices, but I hope we shall speak with such conviction that those to whom we speak shall know of the strength of our feeling and the sincerity of our effort. Remarkable consequences often flow from a well-written letter and a postage stamp. Remarkable results come of quiet conversation with those who carry heavy responsibilities."⁹

Such a proposition may be daunting—to voice unpopular views and to stand up for our opinions and beliefs when others may disagree—but when we stand with the Lord, we never stand alone.

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "My challenge is that we join with people of all faiths who feel accountable to God in defending religious freedom so it can be a beacon for morality. We caution you to be civil and responsible as you defend religious liberty and moral values. We ask that you do this on the Internet and in your personal interactions in the neighborhoods and communities where you live. Be an active participant, not a silent observer."¹⁰

Conclusion

The Church's declaration regarding governments and laws states: "We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society" (D&C 134:1).

We cannot be bystanders in shaping our public environment. We have the duty and the right to get informed about what is happening in our communities and in the world. Then, with the information we have and as the Spirit directs, we can get involved.

As we do, we can rely on the divine promise spoken of by President Thomas S. Monson: "As the winds of change swirl around us and the moral fiber of society continues to disintegrate before our very eyes, may we remember the Lord's precious promise to those who trust in Him: 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness' [Isaiah 41:10]."¹¹

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NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, "In Opposition to Evil," *Ensign*, Sept. 2004, 4.
2. "Knowledge Is Power," editorial in *Times and Seasons*, Aug. 15, 1842, 889; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "What Is Truth?" (Church Educational System devotional, Jan. 13, 2013), 3, speeches.byu.edu.
4. Editorial quoted in James E. Talmage, "Christianity Falsely So-Called," *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1920, 204.
5. Thomas S. Monson, "Priesthood Power," *Ensign*, May 2011, 66.
6. Abraham Lincoln, in Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (2005), 206; spelling standardized.
7. First Presidency letter, Feb. 9, 2012, in "First Presidency Issues Letter on Utah Precinct Caucus Meetings," mormonnewsroom.org/article/first-presidency-issues-letter-utah-precinct-caucus-meetings.
8. See First Presidency letter, Feb. 9, 2012.
9. Gordon B. Hinckley, "In Opposition to Evil," 5.
10. Quentin L. Cook, "Restoring Morality and Religious Freedom," *Ensign*, Sept. 2012, 38.
11. Thomas S. Monson, "Stand in Holy Places," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 86.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To find out more about getting informed and getting involved, scan this QR code or go to lds.org/go/citizenshipEN.

