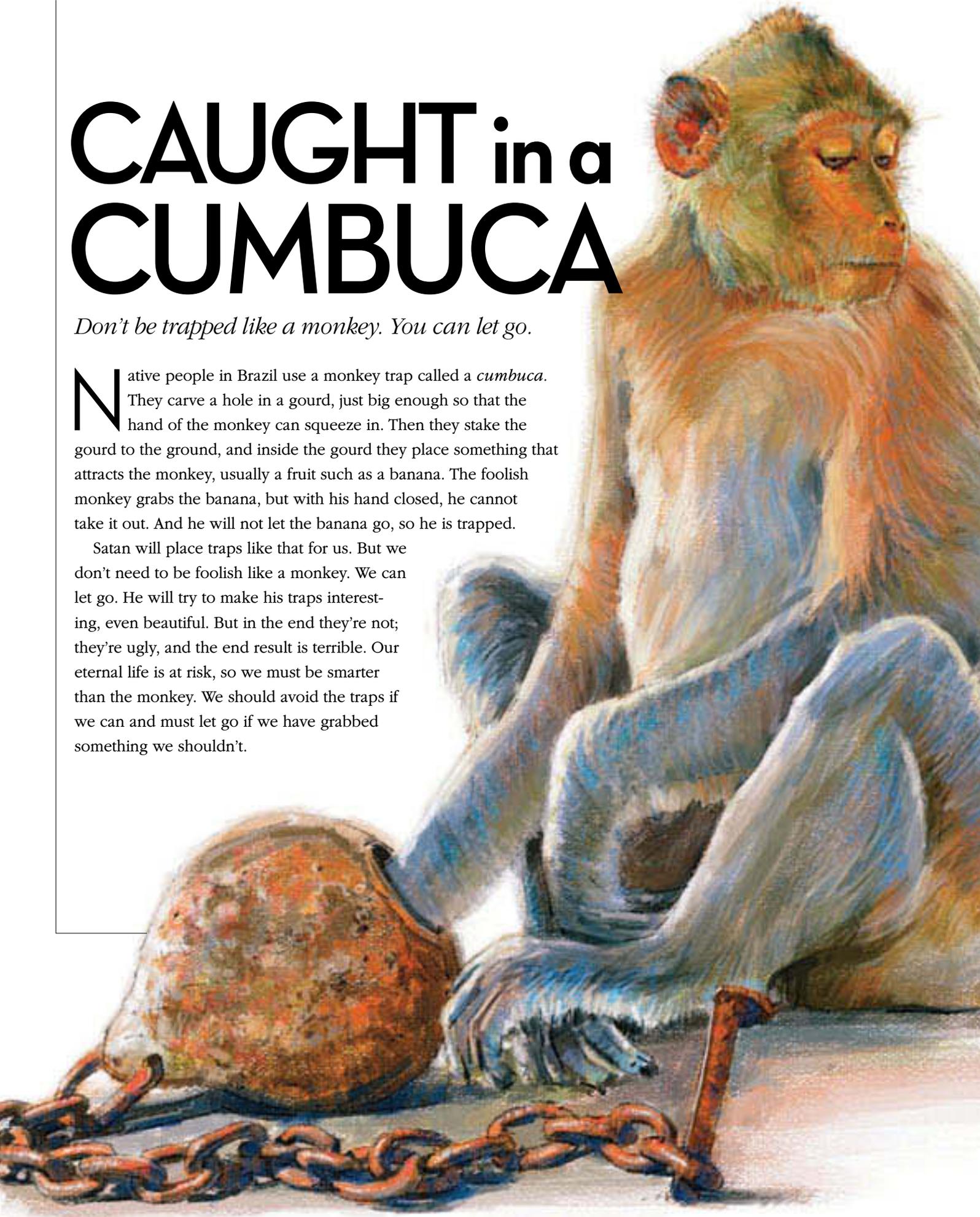


CAUGHT in a CUMBUCA

Don't be trapped like a monkey. You can let go.

Native people in Brazil use a monkey trap called a *cumbuca*. They carve a hole in a gourd, just big enough so that the hand of the monkey can squeeze in. Then they stake the gourd to the ground, and inside the gourd they place something that attracts the monkey, usually a fruit such as a banana. The foolish monkey grabs the banana, but with his hand closed, he cannot take it out. And he will not let the banana go, so he is trapped.

Satan will place traps like that for us. But we don't need to be foolish like a monkey. We can let go. He will try to make his traps interesting, even beautiful. But in the end they're not; they're ugly, and the end result is terrible. Our eternal life is at risk, so we must be smarter than the monkey. We should avoid the traps if we can and must let go if we have grabbed something we shouldn't.



By Elder
 Marcos A. Aidukaitis
 Of the Seventy



Don't Chance the Dance

One night when I was 16, I remember coming back from a Church activity with three friends. We were all in the priests quorum and enjoyed being together. We parked the car in front of my house, and we were talking about the fun we had at church when one of my friends made a suggestion.

Nearby was a club that was popular with teenagers. On Fridays and Saturdays they had dances. He said, "We should go to one of those dances." He suggested we could even use the opportunity to preach the gospel to the youth there. The other three, myself included, tried to tell him it didn't sound

like such a great idea. The standards wouldn't be the same as at Church activities. There would be people smoking and drinking. People would be dressed immodestly. Most of the music would be inappropriate, loud in its volume, and heavy in its beat, often filled with suggestive words.

This was a good friend, a very active young man. But he kept insisting that we should go. "As long as we don't participate in the bad stuff," he said, "it will be just fine." The three of us tried to dissuade him but couldn't. He finally said, "Then I am going to go alone. I am going to show you that there's nothing wrong with it. And you are going to miss out on some great fun." He was determined to stick his hand in the *cumbuca*.

On Friday he went to the dance. The next day, Saturday, he came to

Church-sponsored activities bragging about how fun it had been. He invited us to go the next week. We never did go, but he ended up going on a regular basis until finally he began going to the Saturday night dances as well. Then he would be late to church on Sunday because he was tired from being out so late. Finally he began skipping church.

My Friend Would Not Let Go

Over time he stopped coming to church regularly. He ended up not going on a mission. A few years ago I contacted him over the phone. He was living in a different town far away from me. When we started talking about the Church, he was totally cold, not the same person I used to know.

Looking back, I think of the four of us in that car. The other three all stayed active in the Church, married in the temple, and have served in priesthood leadership positions. But that one excellent friend fell away, married outside the Church, and today is totally inactive. His children do not know the blessings of the gospel. Even though he can still repent, and I hope he will, he is losing valuable time and opportunities.



RECOGNIZING AND AVOIDING TRAPS

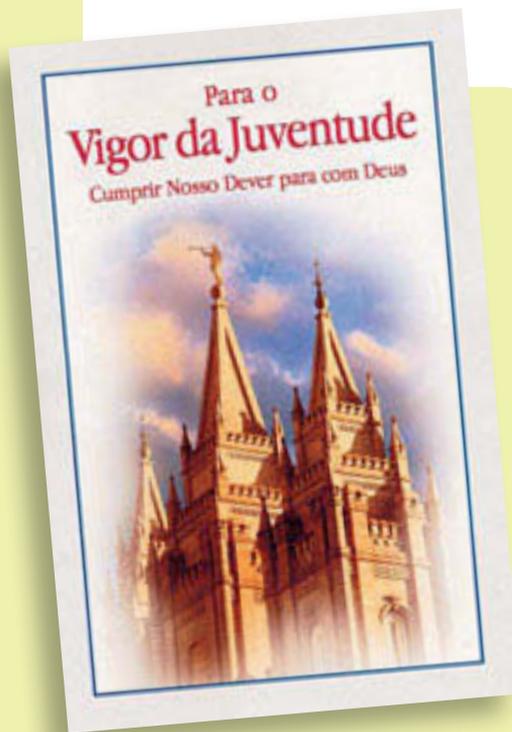
Elder Aidukaitis offers several suggestions for recognizing and avoiding spiritual traps:

“When we do the right things, we have more strength to let go. For instance, participating in sacrament meeting and renewing covenants is very important. Young men should participate in Duty to God and young women in Personal Progress. You should go to seminary. You should listen to and obey good and faithful parents and leaders in the Church. As you do these things, you are enlightened in being able to recognize traps, and you gain strength to resist them.

“Reading the scriptures individually is a great source of inspiration, and fasting and prayer are powerful too. If you find yourself saying, ‘I see the banana in the *cumbuca*, and I feel like grabbing it,’ pray for help, and if you need more help, fast and pray. Heavenly Father will fortify you.

“One of the best protections is to be able to see that a trap is a trap. To do that, we need to know the commandments of God. We need to know that the commandments are not just good opinions; they are directions from our Father in Heaven. Then we don’t get into a debate about whether or not someone’s opinion is good or right. We simply choose to follow the path our Heavenly Father has given us, the path of obedience. If what is being offered does not conform to God’s known standards, then let it go.”

That night in the car, the four of us were at a crossroads. I didn’t know the decision was that important at the time. We simply knew that it was not appropriate to go where he wanted to go. I remember he said, “We will go there, and through our good example we will convert some of those youth.” But he was being deceived, and he ended up being the one who was converted to a different path. As I look back, I can see that something that seems small can have a huge impact over the years. I am happy that I was able to choose what was right.



You need to be familiar with these standards, and you need to make a decision today that you will observe them and not compromise.

Where We Should Stand

In Doctrine and Covenants 87:8 we are counseled, “Stand ye in holy places.” We should stand where the Lord expects us to stand. We must decide today that we will not jeopardize our standards for anything. We will not let Satan deceive us. We will not be trapped.

In the Bible we read about David, who as a shepherd boy was described as having a heart like the Lord’s own heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14; 16:7). The youngest of eight sons, he was anointed by Samuel to become king of Israel, and “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13). He fought and vanquished Goliath in the name of the Lord (see 1 Samuel 17:45–51). Even as a fugitive, he was blessed, guided, and recognized as the Lord’s anointed, and eventually he became a mighty king of Israel (see 1 Samuel 19–26; 2 Samuel 5:3, 8, 10).

But then came a moment when David did not stand in a holy place. Instead, he stood on the roof and watched a beautiful woman bathing. Though she was another man’s wife, he was attracted to her and would not let go of his evil thoughts. They committed adultery, and when she became pregnant, he arranged for the death of her husband. (See 2 Samuel 11:2–17.) Instead of letting go of the temptation when it came, David gave in. He spent the rest of his life regretting what he had done.



MAKE EARLY CORRECTIONS

Small errors and minor drifts away from the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring

sorrowful consequences into our lives. It is therefore of critical importance that we become self-disciplined enough to make early and decisive corrections to get back on the right track and not wait or hope that errors will somehow correct themselves.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Matter of a Few Degrees,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2008, 59.

Small Choices, Big Consequences

So how do you know where to stand and what to do? One source is *For the Strength of Youth*. You need to be familiar with that booklet. The teachings are very clear about what is appropriate for dress and music, what kind of vocabulary you should use, what kind of friends you should have, and much more. You need to be familiar with these standards, and you need to make a decision today that you will observe them and not compromise.

The decision can't be left to the moment of temptation.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said: “The positive things you will want to accomplish need only be decided upon once—like going on a mission and living worthily in order to get married in the temple—and then all other decisions related to these goals can easily be made. Otherwise, each consideration is risky, and each equivocation may result in error. There are some things Latter-day Saints do, and other things we just don't do. The sooner

you decide to do what is right, the better it will be for you!”¹

My dear young friends, be smarter than a monkey! Don't grab something that appears enticing and then refuse to let go. Stand where the Lord wants you to stand, do what He wants you to do, and you'll never be caught in a *cumbuca*. ■

NOTE

1. “President Kimball Speaks Out on Planning Your Life,” *Tambuli*, June 1982, 38; see also *New Era*, Sept. 1981, 50.

