



When Your Friends Want to KNOW WHY

The better you understand others, the better you can help them understand your standards.

By Richard M. Romney
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As a 17-year-old teenager in Arizona, USA, Kathy R. often had to explain to members of her extended family certain things that as a Latter-day Saint she did—or did not do.

“I remember talking with my aunt one time,” Kathy says. “She said, ‘Your church doesn’t let you smoke or drink, right?’ I told her that the Church teaches that drinking and smoking are not good but that Heavenly Father allows me the freedom to choose, and

knowing what I know, I *choose* not to smoke or drink.”

Kathy says that in her case this was a better reply than saying, “Smoking and drinking are against my standards,” although sometimes that might be a perfectly appropriate response.

“My aunt thinks churches force people to be obedient, so when I explained that we have agency, she was really interested in what I had to say,” Kathy says. “When I explained I had set personal goals for myself not to smoke or drink, she was willing to support me.”

Make Caring Part of Sharing

As Kathy’s experience demonstrates, you may have an easier time explaining Church standards to others if you start by asking yourself what you know about the people you’re talking with. What is motivating their questions? Are they just curious about what you believe? Are they asking direct questions and seeking a straightforward response, or are they tentative, hoping that you will understand their perspective before they are willing to trust your counsel? What are *they* interested in hearing?



ALL THE MORE REASON

“Some might say, ‘I don’t think I could live up to your standards.’

All the more reason

to come [join with us]! The Church is designed to nourish the imperfect, the struggling, and the exhausted. It is filled with people who desire with all their heart to keep the commandments, even if they haven’t mastered them yet.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 23.

You may get a thought or feeling from the Spirit about what would be helpful to them. If so, follow the prompting. You don’t need to launch into an impromptu sacrament meeting talk or get into a doctrinal dispute. Keep it conversational. Just explain the spiritual goals you have for yourself and how you came to have them.

Remember that it’s perfectly reasonable to let them know that you may not have all the answers, but you can introduce them to others, such as the missionaries, who can help them find what they’re looking for.

Remember, it’s not about what *you* want to say; it’s about what *they* are ready to hear. Allow room for both of you to express your feelings and simply share what you believe. Include your testimony when appropriate and allow the Holy Ghost to bear witness of the truth. That’s the best way to help others understand what standards are and why you follow them. (See 1 Nephi 10:17–19.)

The Example of Gospel Living

Laurent B. of France remembers how it feels to be the one asking the questions. As a 15-year-old teenager attending Church meetings for the first time, he was impressed with the happiness of the members, especially the youth.

“I had lots of questions,” he says. “Unlike the students at my school, they didn’t smoke or drink and the young men and young women

showed great respect for each other. Everyone seemed to have a sense of direction and purpose, and that was very attractive to me.”

He made friends with Jean-Michel L., 16, and his sister, Eve, 14. “They explained that the Word of Wisdom provides principles for healthy living,” Laurent recalls. “They shared their feelings about chastity and explained that it is a commandment from Heavenly Father, who wants us to be faithful husbands and wives for eternity.

“Not only did they explain their standards to me, but I saw firsthand that they lived what they believed,” Laurent says. “When you keep the commandments it makes you happy, and your happiness will help people want to know why you live that way.”

Laurent’s experience taught him that reciting a bunch of standard answers isn’t the best way to share what you know. The best way is to live what you believe. Then as the scripture says, “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). ■

For more help in answering gospel questions, visit lds.org/go/55914.

NO-CUSSING CLUB

Watch how one young man, by explaining his standards, received local, national, and international attention: lds.org/go/nocussing.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Things You Might Do:

- Record in your journal experiences you have had living Church standards and sharing them with others.
- During fast and testimony meeting or youth meetings, share your testimony of the Lord’s standards.
- Read the general conference address “Preparation Brings Blessings,” by President Thomas S. Monson (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 64). He talks about dating, friendships, honesty, and other standards. Consider making a list of counsel that you would like to work on.