



**By Elder
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Apostles

THE LORD NEEDS YOU Now!

*As an Apostle of
the Lord Jesus Christ,
I invite you to “put
on the whole armour
of God” and join
the battle today.*

The world in which we now live is moving rapidly away from the teachings of Christ in its laws and its customs. As a result, Satan is working overtime to confuse God’s sons and daughters and to divert the very elect from fulfilling their duty and receiving a fulness of the Lord’s blessings.

Satan wants you to stop practicing good habits you learned at home, in seminary and institute, and on your missions—such as having daily scripture study, praying daily, worthily partaking of the sacrament weekly, and giving genuine, heartfelt service. He also wants you to stand on the sidelines in today’s important and crucial battles.

Remember, we are at war—but not a war of guns and bullets. Nevertheless, the war is real, with countless human casualties. The war is in fact a continuation of the one that began in the premortal world.

Paul invited us to “put on the whole armour of God.” He said, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:11–12).

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I invite you to “put on the whole armour of God” and join the battle today, as the sons of Helaman did so many years ago.

Don’t wait until you get married or start your lifelong career or get older. The Church needs our youth now. The Lord needs you now!

You will recall that 2,000 stripling warriors “entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites” (Alma 53:17). The Church needs modern stripling warriors who have made a covenant “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).

Young women and young men are the modern daughters and sons of Helaman. May it be said of you as it was said of them: “They became now at this period of time . . . a great support” (Alma 53:19).

Combating Pornography

We need you to join with us in the fight against pornography. It’s a terrible plague that is spreading across the world.

More than 180 years ago, the Lord revealed His law of health, including a warning about the use of tobacco (see D&C 89). Many people listened to the Lord’s warning, but many more did not. No one knew at that time or even when I was your age the long-term effects of smoking. Today, after decades of scientific research, we now know smoking’s contribution to lung cancer and other deadly diseases. The Lord’s Word of Wisdom was a protective blessing.



In similar ways the Lord in our day has warned us about the effects of pornography. Millions of people faithfully follow the Lord's counsel, whereas countless others do not. We don't have to wait, my dear friends, for 180 years or even for 10 years to discover the devastating effects of pornography. Current scientific research has revealed that pornography cripples young adults in several ways and poisons their chances of one day having a loving and lasting marriage relationship.

Research has shown that frequent use of pornography can lead to obsessive behaviors and can rewire the brain to capture a person in the prison of addiction. Research has also verified that pornography fosters unrealistic expectations and delivers dangerous miseducation about healthy human intimacy.

Most insidious, pornography conditions you to see people as objects that you can disregard and disrespect both emotionally and physically.

Another aspect of pornography is that it is generally a secret activity. Users often hide their use or at least minimize their use from everyone, including their romantic partners or spouses. Studies have found that when people engage in this type of self-concealment—when they do things they are not proud of and keep those things a secret from their family members and friends—it not only hurts their relationships and leaves them feeling lonely, but it also makes them more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem. Keeping secrets damages trust.

Initially, we must avoid pornography ourselves because it is deadly. It kills genuine, tender human relationships—destroying marriages and families. It destroys the spirit of the person who consumes it as surely as the most deadly poison kills the body and the mind.

Do not be deceived. Do not think that once you go on your mission or once you get married you can stop this addictive behavior. If you are involved in it now, if you are entrapped in this practice, get spiritual help now. You can overcome pornography with the Savior's assistance. Do not wait! I plead with you to leave it alone! There are many

resources on LDS.org that will help you override the darkness of pornographic images.

These are challenging days—but no more challenging than the days of Helaman and his stripling warriors when they stood to defend their families and the Church. This is your time to step forward and join the ranks of other righteous and dedicated young men and young women to fight the battle against pornography.

The Doctrine of Marriage

I want you to understand the position of the Church on marriage as given us by our Heavenly Father through the scriptures and “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” That inspired document states: “The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.”¹

Apostles are charged to be watchmen on the tower, to see “the enemy while he [is] yet afar off” (D&C 101:54), and to teach the doctrines of Christ. All of you know that the traditional definition of marriage is under attack today. There are those who are framing the discussion focused in terms of civil rights. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have explained the Church's position and doctrine of God's purpose and plan for His spirit children to experience mortal life, which is essential to our everlasting and eternal life.

I quote from a statement issued to Church leaders in 2014 and ask you to read carefully:

“Changes in the civil law do not, indeed cannot, change the moral law that God has established. God expects us to uphold and keep His commandments regardless of divergent opinions or trends in society. His law of chastity is clear: sexual relations are proper only between a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. We urge you to review and teach Church members the doctrine contained in ‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World.’”



The statement continues:

“Just as those who promote same-sex marriage are entitled to civility, the same is true for those who oppose it. . . .

“As members of the Church, we are responsible to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to illuminate the great blessings that flow from heeding God’s commandments as well as the inevitable consequences of ignoring them. We invite you to pray that people everywhere will have their hearts softened to the truths of the gospel, and that wisdom will be granted to those who are called upon to decide issues critical to society’s future.”²

I know you love and support the Lord and sustain His prophets, but I also know that some of you may be confused regarding the many implications of the Church’s decision to sustain God’s revealed plan for His children.

I also know that some of our youth struggle to understand how to explain the doctrine surrounding family and marriage and still remain kind, gentle, and loving toward those who do not agree. You may be afraid

that you will be labeled as a bigot and as being intolerant.

You may know someone who struggles with same-sex attraction or has made a decision to live in a same-sex relationship. Your love for that person as a son or daughter of God can create an inward struggle as you try to love and support him or her and still stand for the Lord’s eternal plan of happiness.

Let us be clear: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believes that “the experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though individuals do not choose to have such attractions, they do choose how to respond to them. With love and understanding, the Church reaches out to all God’s children, including [those with same-sex attraction].”³

The Church does not teach or advocate shunning or other unchristianlike actions. We must love and strive to help others to understand that no one should ignore or discount the commandments of God.

Our Father in Heaven knew the consequences of living in a fallen world and, therefore, provided a Savior, a “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” for His children.

HELP AND UNDERSTANDING

The Church offers help and understanding for those battling pornography or wrestling with same-sex attraction. It also offers resources for Church members wanting to deepen their understanding of the divine institution of marriage or to share the gospel online. Consider visiting the following online resources:

- “Overcoming Pornography through the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” overcomingpornography.org.
- “God Loveth His Children,” lds.org.
- “The Divine Institution of Marriage,” mormonnewsroom.org.
- “Sharing the Gospel Online,” lds.org/church/share.

A Witness and a Warning

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”⁴

I am one who joined in that warning. As one of the watchmen on the tower, I am responsible to “blow the trumpet, and warn the people” (see Ezekiel 33:1–9). I do so because I love you and want you to understand that we must face the Lord and keep His commandments. That is my duty.

The Lord’s warning also comes with an invitation to come unto Him. Our Father in Heaven knew the consequences of living in a fallen world and, therefore, provided a Savior, a “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” for His children (Revelation 13:8).

In the Gospel of John we learn, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Please remember that the gospel is the “good news.”⁵ It is a message of hope. If you are in trouble now, get help. The Lord is merciful and forgiving.

The Apostle Paul taught:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . .

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 37–39).

Because of Jesus Christ, peace can replace guilt. Healthy relationships can be restored. Addictions can be overcome.

We need to let our family and our friends know this truth: God is love, “and he inviteth [us] all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him” (2 Nephi 26:33).

We need you to be engaged in the work of salvation before, during, and after your missions.

Using Technology to Bless Lives

The Lord invites you to get involved and use the social media platforms you prefer to share the gospel and stand as modern sons and daughters of Helaman in the great battles of the last days. He wants you to become the modern stripling warriors who stand strong and united to the truth. He wants you to be courageous and stalwart in the face of the enemy’s advances. We know that in the end the Lord will win the day and Satan will be defeated.

Now, you have the opportunity to use social media wisely. Remember that there is a proper time and place for you to use social media, and sharing your thoughts and testimony of the things you are learning and feeling is one of those times. Through various



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social media platforms, you can have gospel conversations with family, with friends, and, for returned missionaries, even with former investigators and new members. You can stand as witnesses to the truth and defend the kingdom.

Defending the Kingdom

I know some of you worry about being misjudged, ridiculed, and even harassed if you stand up for Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Church. I understand your concerns.

I served in the British Mission after the end of World War II as a young missionary. At that time Mormons were “a hiss and a byword” (3 Nephi 16:9), and missionaries were laughed at and ridiculed. People even threw things at us, and some would spit at us. However, we did not retreat, but we continued to bear our testimonies and share the gospel. Like Abinadi, we did not shrink; like Paul, we did not shrink; and like the Savior, we did not shrink. At the time we could not have imagined the impact of our labors. We had 14 districts and no stakes. Today, 46 stakes of Zion are found in the British Isles.

My dear beloved young friends, don't worry about those in the large and spacious building. Nephi saw that they would mock and point “their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.” Don't

be like those who “after they had tasted of the fruit . . . were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:27, 28).

You are a great and important generation, and this is a great time to be alive! The future is bright. Say to yourself, “I am helping the Lord as I reach out to share my testimony and to teach the truths God has revealed in these last days.”

May the Lord bless you with wisdom beyond your years, that you will wisely realize that we are in this battle and that we must stand together, young and old. May you never forget, in this journey you are on, that you are precious to the future of preparing the world for that day when Jesus Christ will say, “It is enough,” and will return to rule and reign as the Savior, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the Redeemer of the world, who I testify lives. ■

From a CES devotional for young adults, “Be Still and Know That I Am God,” delivered in California, USA, on May 4, 2014.

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. Letter from the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, dated Jan. 10, 2014 (United States) and Mar. 6, 2014 (outside the United States).
3. “Love One Another: A Discussion on Same-Sex Attraction,” mormonsandgays.org.
4. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 129.
5. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Gospels.”