

WE WANT THE BEST FOR YOU



Our happiness will come in living our lives the right way for the right reasons—reasons that are eternal, reasons that matter in this life and in the next.

By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*How can you be truly happy?
Here are some answers that are tried and true.*

I want you to know from the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve that we think you are the greatest! We are immensely proud of you. We want the very best for you—we always have and we always will. Thanks for wanting to live gospel standards. We can have a lot of fun and we can have terrific times together. But that can ultimately only be in ways consistent with the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ. In this Church, as it says in the Book of Mormon, we live “after the manner of happiness.” Those of us who have lived a little longer and walked just a little farther have come to know what does and doesn’t make one happy. And what makes people happy is the gospel of Jesus Christ—even if at your age you are only beginning to learn that great truth.

True to the Faith

I would like you to go back nearly 600

years to the New Year of 1412. That week in the small village of Domrémy, France, a baby girl was born who, a little later, at roughly the age some of you are, changed the political and religious landscape of her world. Through military developments and a variety of personal religious experiences, Joan of Arc, sometimes called the Maid of Orléans, was made a captain in the French army at the tender age of 16. In a rather remarkable series of battles and victories, she brought acclaim to herself and her cause, inspiring not only the men under her command but also the entire French nation. Later she was captured, tried, and put to death—burned at the stake—her life complete at 19 years of age.

As the fires were being ignited around the stake to which she was tied, Joan was given a last chance to save her life and regain her liberty if she would deny her religious—and thus some of her personally motivated political—beliefs. She refused to deny anything she believed or anything she had said about her faith, and thus chose fire above freedom, and principle above politics. Maxwell Anderson, who wrote a moving drama about this young woman and her courage, has her say in his play as the flames begin to



*What your leaders
and I are saying to
you is "trust us."
We are trying to call
out to you, looking
back to the path we
walked and that you
are now walking. We
are still walking it
too, but we are doing
so now with the
advantage of a little
more experience and
a little more wisdom.
We want to help.*

We don't want to smother you or make you irritated or infringe on a glorious future, because that is exactly what we want for you—a glorious future! And that means wanting you safe, knowing the consequences of your actions.



consume her: "The world can use these words. . . . Every man gives his life for what he believes; every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing, [and yet] they give up their lives to that little or nothing. One life is all we have, and we live it as we believe in living it, and then it's gone. But to surrender what you are, and live without belief—that's more terrible than dying—more terrible than dying young" (*Joan of Lorraine*, act 2, interlude 3).

My young brothers and sisters, that is my message to you—a message from me, from the leaders of the Church, and from a teenage young woman of 600 years ago. "One life is all we have" and our happiness will come in living it the right way for the right reasons—reasons that are eternal, reasons that matter in this life and in the next. Now, we don't want you to die! And we surely don't want you to die young, but truly there are some things worse than dying. In Joan's words that would be to "live without belief," to surrender what you are and live contrary to what you know—or should know—to be true.

Be Strong and Courageous

Two years ago the Mutual theme was to be "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works" (Mosiah 5:15). Last year's theme was to "be . . . an example of the believers" (1 Timothy 4:12). And this year's

theme is to “be strong and of a good courage” (Joshua 1:9). Those themes say scripturally and much more powerfully what that little French girl tried to convey so long ago.

They say:

Stand up and be strong. (In some cases that means to grow up and be strong.)

Be faithful.

Be courageous.

Be worthy.

Be clean.

Wickedness Never Was Happiness

In a phrase I remember from my own youth it means, “get serious”—serious about the gospel, serious about the decisions of life, serious about repenting if we need to, and serious about the consequences if we don’t.

As much as I loved my own young years—and I had a wonderful family, wonderful friends, and a wonderful life—nevertheless I don’t envy the challenges you face in the world in which you live, a world that is quite different from those idyllic young years of my life. You have more temptation than I had; you face a world much less committed to religious values; you deal with drugs I didn’t know existed; and pornography—well, in my day we didn’t even know what the word meant or what it represented. Now it is true that I also never had a computer or a cell phone or an iPod. You have many more material blessings than I had, but along with those blessings over those nearly 50 years have also come a lot more temptation, a lot more heartache, a lot more personal tragedy.

What your leaders and I are saying to you is “trust us.” We are trying to call out to you back over the years, looking back to the path we walked and that you are now walking. We are *still* walking it too, but we are doing so now with the advantage of a little more experience and a little more wisdom. We want to help. We don’t want to smother you or make you irritated or infringe on a glorious future, because that is *exactly* what we want for you—a glorious future! And that means wanting you safe,

knowing the consequences of your actions. I have seen those consequences in the lives of others for those 50 years I have been speaking of. But it could be 150 years—or in the case of Joan of Arc, 600 years. Not much changes. As Alma said more than 2,000 years ago, “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). It’s still true!

What Matters Most

My young brothers and sisters, I love you. I have traveled the earth meeting you. I have loved you and admired you everywhere I have met you. You inspire me and fill me with hope. In so many cases you are doing better than my generation did, I suppose partly because you *have* been forced to take your faith seriously and to consider the commandments you are asked to keep. But unfortunately that isn’t true of everyone. Some lives have already been scarred and scorched in your teenage years—too soon, too sadly, too tragically—lives foolishly damaged almost before they have begun. Please don’t reinvent the moral wheel! Don’t feel that you have to learn every tragic lesson in life personally.

Listen to the words of the Lord. Listen to your leaders. Listen to your parents. Listen to the best that is within you. Above all listen to the sweet, soft, undeniable whispering of the Spirit which will teach you all things, including that what I am saying to you is true. It *is* true.

Believe in yourself, and believe in this gospel. Believe that we know what we are talking about, and what we are talking about is how terrific you are and how terrific your life can be if you will live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I testify of President Monson’s love for you, of his true prophetic role, and of this true and living Church. I testify that God loves you and wants you to embrace that Church and that gospel. I testify that the Savior loves you and died for you because some things mattered more to *Him* than death, mattered even more than dying young. What mattered more than that to Him was you—your life, your chance, your time, your future. **NE**

From an address prepared for the New Year’s Eve celebration A Brand New Year in 2008.