

BEING IN THE WORLD

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but Not of the World

Sodom and Gomorrah have actual and symbolic significance representing wickedness in the world. The Lord appeared to Abraham and said, speaking of those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, “Their sin is very grievous” (Genesis 18:20). Their sinfulness was so great, and those who were righteous so few, that God destroyed these two cities of the plain. Our recent prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, stated: “All of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society. Our young people have never faced a greater challenge. We have never seen more clearly the lecherous face of evil.”¹

Separating evil from our lives has become even more essential since our homes are wired to bring much of what the Lord has condemned into our own living rooms if we are not vigilant. One of the most difficult challenges in our lives is to be in the world but not of the world (see John 15:19). Gospel doctrine makes it clear that we must live in this world to achieve our eternal destination. We must be tried and tested and found worthy of a greater kingdom (see 2 Nephi 2:11; D&C 101:78). We must do as Abraham did when he pitched his tent and built “an altar unto the Lord” (Genesis 13:18) and not do as Lot did when he “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (Genesis 13:12).

Being a Light to the World

We cannot avoid the world. A cloistered

existence is not the answer. In a positive sense, our contribution to the world is part of our challenge and is essential if we are to develop our talents. President Brigham Young (1801–77) said, “Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all science and art belongs to the Saints.”²

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) challenged members to accomplish more, stating, “We must recognize that excellence and quality are a reflection of how we feel about ourselves and about life and about God.”³

To accomplish the above, members of the Church need to be involved in the world in a positive way. How then do we balance the need to positively contribute to the world and to not succumb to the sins of the world? (See D&C 25:10; D&C 59:9.) Two principles will make a significant difference.

1. Let people know you are a committed Latter-day Saint.

I learned the importance of this early in my career. After finishing my education at Stanford Law School, I sought employment at a particular law firm. No members of the Church were associated with the firm, but the firm was made up of lawyers of character and ability. After a morning of interviews, the senior partner and two other partners invited me to lunch. The senior partner inquired if I would like a pre-lunch alcoholic drink and



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later if I would like wine. In both cases, I declined. The second time, I informed him that I was an active Latter-day Saint and did not drink alcoholic beverages.

I received an offer of employment from the firm. A few months later, the senior partner told me the offer of the alcoholic beverages was a test. He noted that my résumé made it clear that I had served an LDS mission. He had determined that he would hire me only if I was true to the teachings of my own church. He considered it a significant matter of character and integrity.

In my years in San Francisco, I knew some members who avoided letting their associates know they were Latter-day Saints. Invariably they were drawn into compromising situations that could have been avoided had they forthrightly declared what they believed. They symbolically pitched their tents toward Sodom (see Genesis 13:12).

2. Be confident about and live your beliefs.

In our personal lives, we should avoid the sometimes evil and destructive pursuits of the world—especially when they are

contrary to the gospel standards. We should not be caught up in the current trends of society when they are not in harmony with revealed truth.

A derogatory comment occasionally made about members of the Church is: “They are like sheep waiting to be told what to do by their leaders. Why can’t they think for themselves?” While this comment may sound plausible on its face, the truth is that faithful Latter-day Saints, in a thoughtful and prayerful manner, study the doctrines and principles in the scriptures and in the counsel from living prophets and then seek to receive a confirming witness from the Holy Ghost. They don’t have to make every heartbreaking mistake in life. They know what is right and what is wrong. They don’t have to decide over and over again how they will live. They can benefit from the life experiences of all those generations that have preceded them and from instructions from our Father in Heaven and His anointed servants. They can turn away from temptation.

We inevitably must make choices. If we know the doctrines and principles of the gospel, we can make wise decisions. If our lives are pure, the Spirit will guide us. Then we will be able to symbolically pitch our tents toward the temple (see Genesis 13:18) and the covenants we have made to the Lord, and we will be in the world and not of the world. **NE**

Adapted from “Lessons from the Old Testament: In the World but Not of the World,” Ensign, Feb. 2006, 53–55.

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Living in the Fulness of Times,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 6.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 196.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Gospel Vision of the Arts,” *Ensign*, July 1977, 5.