

THE New Era

J U N E

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**SPECIAL ISSUE:
KEEPING YOUR
STANDARDS
HIGH**

**ABOUT
KISSING,
P. 32**

**MEDIA GUIDE,
P. 10**



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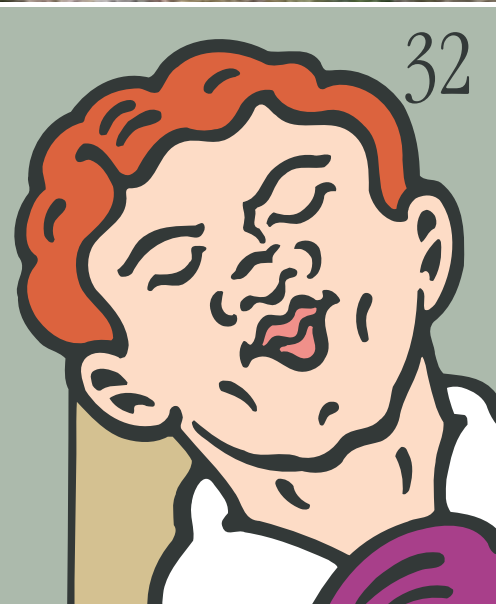
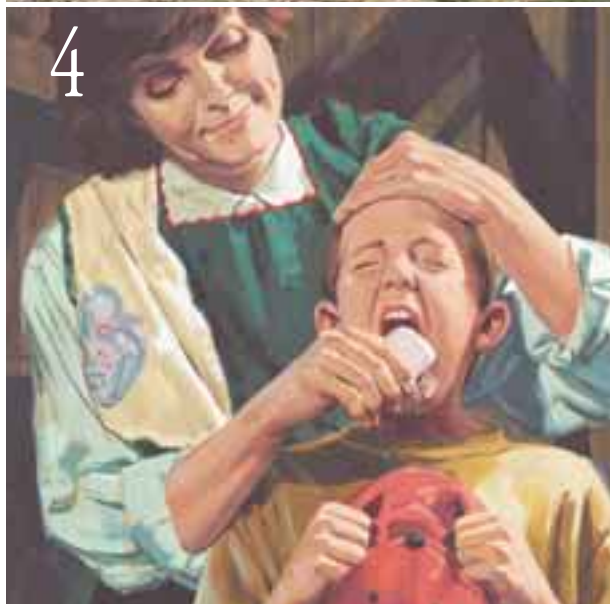
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Cover: Set lofty goals
and rise up to meet
them. See "Making a
Mighty Change," p. 4.

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Keeping
high
standards
is part of living a
gospel-centered
life. In this
special issue of
the *New Era*,
we've chosen
articles to help
you understand
and live Church
standards. As you
read, we hope
you are inspired
to continue
following the
words of the Lord
given through His
latter-day
prophets. And in
your journey, we
hope you can
stand as a
witness and be a
standard-bearer
to the world.



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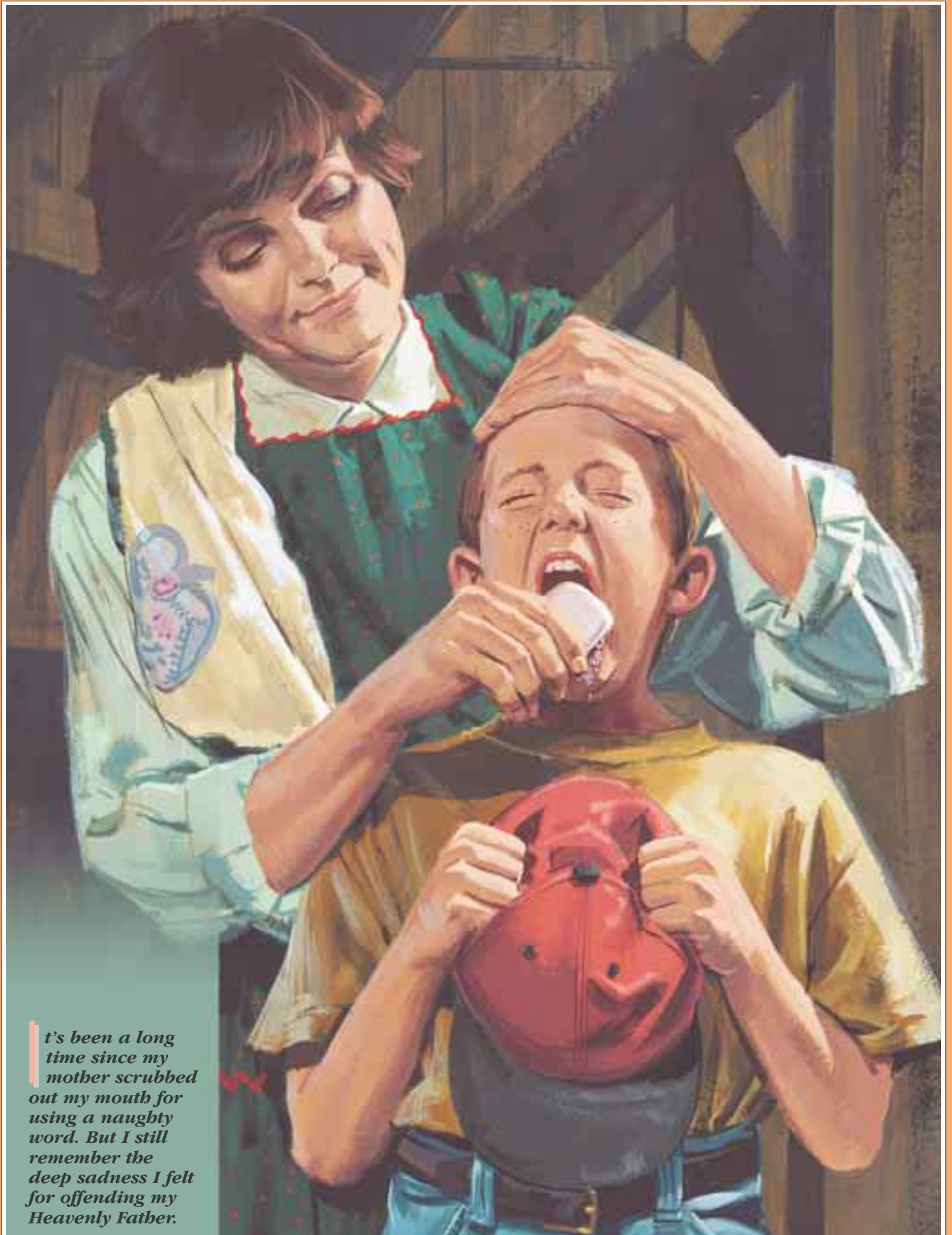
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t's been a long time since my mother scrubbed out my mouth for using a naughty word. But I still remember the deep sadness I felt for offending my Heavenly Father.

MAKING A MIGHTY CHANGE

When we make the Lord's standards our own, they become our friends—a blessing, not an irritant. In a sense, they are us!

I'm going to ask you to participate in a brief experiment. Start by standing in front of a mirror and reciting out loud to yourself the 13th article of faith. You may remember it as the longest and last article you memorized as you were preparing to advance from Primary.

Analyze your feelings and mannerisms as you voice the words “We believe in being honest, true, chaste”; “we hope all things”; “we seek after these things”; etc.

Do you feel a little removed or distant from the expression of belief being made? Do the words seem to apply more to *we* than to *me*? Do they possibly convey a *group* but not a strong *individual* sense of conviction?

Now repeat article 13 again. But this time, personalize it by substituting and emphasizing the pronoun *I* wherever the pronoun *we* appears. Say the words slowly and thoughtfully: “*I* believe in being honest, true, chaste”; “*I* follow the admonition of Paul”; “*I* have endured many things”; etc. Do you detect a difference? Does it feel more like a part of you, something you truly accept and are personally committed to?

Making the transition

There is a critical difference between living our lives by rules and standards that seem imposed on us and living by standards that we regard as our own. Adopting as our own the standards of conduct God's prophets have established is an important part of growing up and becoming converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For most young people it involves a gradual process of spiritual maturing during which the gospel standards become something we are, not just something we believe or do.

This important transition begins when we decide to make the gospel of Jesus Christ—God's plan for our lives—our own personal plan for life. If we seek to obey the standards, requirements, and commandments which are included in God's plan, we will come to know they are true (see John 7:16–17). If we then do our best to make right choices and to repent of mistakes and sins, we eventually experience what the scriptures refer to as a “mighty change” in our hearts (see Alma 5:14–26). At this point, standards are no longer a source of irritation or even something we reluctantly tolerate. Instead, they become our friends, and we appreciate and embrace them. In a sense they are us!

The truth about consequences

When we reach this milestone in our spiritual progression, some wonderful blessings and consequences will follow. Most importantly, we will experience the joy and peace of conscience that come as



Wonderful things happen when we embrace the Lord's standards as our own. We will experience the joy and peace of conscience that come as a result of worthiness.

by Elder Marlin
K. Jensen
of the Quorum of the
Seventy

When we feel the closeness to God that comes with keeping His standards, we do not want to do anything to offend Him. Joseph's experience in resisting Potiphar's wife is a powerful example of this truth. His moral courage came from his relationship with God, as illustrated by his words: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9).

a result of worthiness. The earliest memory I have of the relationship between keeping God's standards and experiencing happiness is associated with my own baptism. I recall the anticipation I felt as I awaited my eighth birthday and how sincerely I tried to exercise faith in Christ and repent of any wrongdoing. When the memorable day came, the ordinances themselves were most impressive. I vividly remember the warm water enveloping me and the equally warm spiritual feeling I later had as I was confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. The joyous feeling of being clean and close to God meant so much to me that I vowed I would never sin again. Unfortunately, my youthful good intentions failed a few days later when I responded in frustration to my older brother's teasing by uttering what my parents had warned me was a "naughty" word. Much to my dismay, my ever-vigilant mother overheard me and came dashing out of the house with fire in her eyes! She marched me down a path to our dairy barn where my father kept a basin of water and a bar of soap. Pushing my head toward the basin, she began vigorously scrubbing my mouth out with soap, all the while impressing upon me her desire that I "never use such words again!"

Although it has been more than 50 years since that humiliating moment, I still remember perfectly the deep sadness I felt because I had offended my brother, my mother, and, most serious of all, my Heavenly Father. I learned then a lesson that the First Presidency has taught and which has been reconfirmed many times in my life: We cannot do wrong and feel right (see *For the Strength of Youth*, 4).

Through the years, I have also come to understand that the joy I experienced at the time of my baptism, and many times since, depends upon loving relationships with God, family, and others. God provides standards to protect those relationships from the damage that naturally accompanies sin. For example, sexual activity outside of marriage is enticing to some because it seems to offer closeness and belonging as well as pleasure. However, in reality it damages our relationship with God, brings pain to family and other loved ones, and cheats those who take part in it.

Direction, not degree

Another desirable consequence of accepting the gospel plan and its standards as our own is that we become more concerned about where we are going, or with the upward direction of our lives, than about how far we can go in pressing against and testing the outer limits of God's laws. Young people who are becoming truly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ are not interested in distinguishing the severity of their sins by using terms like *heavy* or *light*, *petty* or *grand*. Instead, they know by the Spirit that "the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance" (Alma 45:16), and they strive to avoid sin in all its forms. The idea of deliberately sinning now with the intent of repenting later is quickly rejected by them as being offensive to their Heavenly Father and contrary to His plan for happiness.

As our commitment to the gospel and its standards deepens, our understanding of God's purposes is enlarged and our feelings about temptation and sin change. In our early years, some temptations may actually appear enticing, and we may struggle with exercising our agency in right ways. Indeed, we may make some mistakes. Thankfully, the gospel provides a way for us to repent and obtain forgiveness. As we progress in choosing and doing the right, we will eventually join King Benjamin's people in having "no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). Through obedience, growth even beyond this desirable state is possible—to that condition attained by the Saints in Alma's day who became so devoted to God and His ways that they "could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence" (Alma 13:12). What a wonderful result of obeying divine standards!

Eliminating hypocrisy

Another wonderful benefit of living according to standards we have internalized is that we gradually eliminate hypocrisy from our thinking and our behavior. The English word *hypocrisy* comes from a Greek word which means playing a part upon a stage. Until standards become part of our basic character, we sometimes play the role of a religious person without

really being one. As we search for our true identity, we may behave like chameleons, frequently changing colors to blend with our surroundings. We act one way at school, another at church.

To most people, however, nothing is more appealing than someone who is “genuine” or “real,” and no one is more genuine or real than a young Latter-day Saint whose behavior consistently matches his or her standards. I know many young Latter-day Saints who live with this high degree of personal integrity. I have met them all over the world, and regardless of language or skin color or dress, they are similar in many ways. They are at peace with God and themselves. They are quietly confident and generally content with their natural abilities and endowments, even though they may not be among the smartest or the most attractive or athletic. They have close and satisfying relationships with God, family, and a variety of friends. Peer pressure really isn’t a factor in their choices between right or wrong. By making God’s standards their own, they have already decided how they will respond when temptation beckons. They also realize that in doing right they are not alone but are part of an ever-growing number of young Latter-day Saints the world over who love God and uphold His standards.

When we feel the closeness to God that comes with keeping His standards, we do not want to do anything to offend Him. Joseph’s experience in resisting Potiphar’s wife is a powerful example of this truth. His moral courage came from his relationship with God, as illustrated by his words: “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9).

When God feels as close and real to us as He did to Joseph, we will no longer view the gospel simply as a set of rules or standards to be obeyed. We will move to a higher plane and realize that our loyalty is really to a living, loving Father in Heaven who wants us to become like Him and to share eternally with our families in all He has. We must never forget that we are now becoming what we will one day be. His standards will help us become what He is. God bless us to succeed—on His terms! **NE**



MAN *of My*

He was perfect—except for his bad habits and attitudes. And I just knew I could change him—if only he would give me a chance.

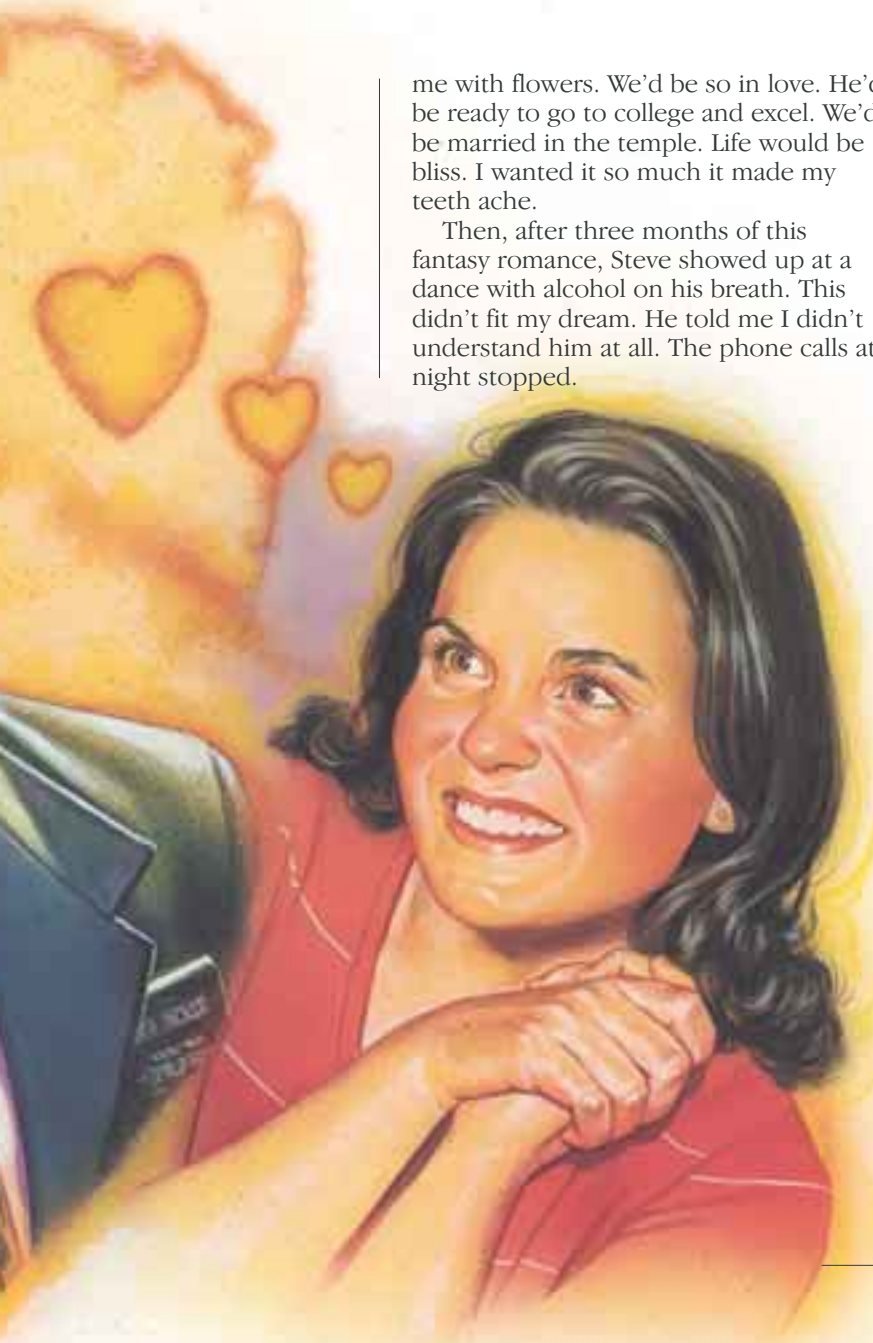
Steve was tall, handsome, 17, and a senior. I was a sophomore and thought I was madly in love with Steve. He liked me too, and I thought that was great. We didn't date because I wasn't old enough; we didn't go to the same school either. But he did call me, and I did get to see him at the stake dances twice a month. I envisioned a romance that would last forever.

Steve wasn't the most active churchgoer around, but I just knew I could help him change. I used to pray to Heavenly Father to inspire me about how to help Steve become active in the Church. But most of all, I prayed for things to work out between us.

I used to imagine him going on a mission while I finished high school. I dreamed we would write faithfully, and everything would be so romantic. I imagined him returning home, surprising



DREAMS



me with flowers. We'd be so in love. He'd be ready to go to college and excel. We'd be married in the temple. Life would be bliss. I wanted it so much it made my teeth ache.

Then, after three months of this fantasy romance, Steve showed up at a dance with alcohol on his breath. This didn't fit my dream. He told me I didn't understand him at all. The phone calls at night stopped.

All I could do was cry and pray. I did a lot of both. For months I prayed to Heavenly Father to inspire Steve to give me another chance. I will be more tolerant, I thought. I will be more understanding. With *me* he will change. No one is perfect, I told myself. He just needs more time to grow up. My prayers were pleading and demanding. They didn't even hint at the idea of listening to the Spirit and obeying the will of my Heavenly Father.

Fortunately, Steve never did show an interest in me again. Later, while I was still in high school, I heard that Steve's girlfriend was pregnant. They got married, but now they're divorced. I'm sorry for Steve, but I'm so thankful my prayers at 15 weren't answered the way I wanted them to be. I'm grateful my life has gone the way it has—without him.

Since then I've served a mission, graduated from college, and been married in the temple. I married a returned missionary who is 100 times more wonderful than any man my teenage dreams ever imagined. And unlike Steve or some of the others I dated, my husband never needed to change the way he was living to make me happy. He was just right the way he was.

Today, I thank my Heavenly Father for those unanswered prayers. At 15 I thought I was asking for a good thing—now I know better. I'm so thankful for a loving Heavenly Father who knew better and didn't answer those prayers, even though I felt hurt at the time. He made my dreams come true in a much grander way than I ever imagined. **NE**



MIXED

Signals

If supermarkets put polluted food alongside wholesome food and left it up to you to judge, you'd become an educated consumer in a hurry, right? Well, you're facing just that kind of situation in today's media market. So here are some guidelines.

How's your media diet—healthy or harmful? Here are some tips for becoming a wise consumer.

From TVs and CDs to VCRs and DVDs, it's a veritable alphabet soup of media out there. Deciding what is and isn't appropriate to look at or listen to can sometimes be downright dot-complex.

New Era editors researched the subject and came up with some ideas and guidelines to help readers better select from the various kinds of media available. And in keeping with the alphabet theme, remember President Gordon B. Hinckley gave us the B's:

- Be grateful.
- Be smart.
- Be clean.
- Be true.
- Be humble.
- Be prayerful.

So when in doubt about that video you plan to watch or that CD you're thinking about buying, follow the prophet's counsel, OK?

Music

Be wary of ads encouraging you to purchase music. The goal of the music industry isn't to produce uplifting music with inspiring lyrics. Its goal is to sell music. A recent study of 55 music recordings labeled with explicit content warnings showed that all of these recordings were targeted to children under 17 (FTC Report on the Marketing of Violent Entertainment to Children, Sept. 2000).

Don't rely on the record companies to tell you what music is appropriate. Although record companies are required to include warning labels on music with explicit lyrics, none of the record companies have written guidelines to define what explicit lyrics are (FTC Report).

"Music can be used to exalt and inspire or to carry messages of degradation and destruction. It is therefore important that as Latter-day Saints we at all times apply the principles of the gospel and seek the guidance of the Spirit in selecting the music with which we surround ourselves" (Priesthood Bulletin, Aug. 1973).

Just as sacred music can inspire us to do good, corrupt music can tempt us to



QUICK MEDIA EVALUATION GUIDE

1. Are you informed? If not, read a reputable review and ask others.
2. Does it contain vulgarity, pornography, or other unsuitable material?
3. Does its message build up or tear down the teachings of the gospel?
4. If you've decided your choice is inappropriate, it's never too late to walk out, turn it off, or put it down.



Food for the mind

“We must not feed ourselves a diet of trash. We become what we think; we think about things we hear and read and see” (Ensign, Sept. 1984, 72).

*—Elder
H. Burke Peterson
Emeritus Member of
the Seventy*



Be selective

“While fine productions on . . . media are uplifting and entertaining, we need to be very selective in choosing what we see and how much of our time such an activity deserves” (Ensign, Nov. 1990, 65).

—Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve

stray. “In our day music itself has been corrupted. Music can, by its tempo, by its beat, by its intensity, dull the spiritual sensitivity of men. . . .

“Young people, you cannot afford to fill your mind with the unworthy hard music of our day. It is not harmless. It can welcome onto the stage of your mind unworthy thoughts and set the tempo to which they dance and to which you may act.

“You degrade yourself when you identify with all of those things which seem now to surround such extremes in music: the shabbiness, the irreverence, the immorality, and the addictions. Such music as that is not worthy of you. You should have self-respect.

“You are a son or a daughter of Almighty God. He has inspired a world full of wonderful things to learn and to do, uplifting music of many kinds that you may enjoy” (Boyd K.Packer, *Ensign* Jan.1974, 25, 28).

“Instead, we encourage you to listen to uplifting music, both popular and classical, that builds the spirit. Learn some favorite hymns from our . . . hymnbook that build faith and spirituality. Attend dances where the music and the lighting and the dance movements are conducive to the Spirit. Watch those shows and entertainment that lift the spirit and promote clean thoughts and actions. Read books and magazines that do the same” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 84).

The Internet

Computers have literally changed the world, including the way we work, learn, and communicate. Part of the computer world is the Internet—a powerful way for gaining access to the abundant knowledge stores throughout the world. Unfortunately, it’s



VIDEO GAME PICKS

1. Be familiar with the ratings, but more importantly, make your own judgments after becoming familiar with the game.
2. Try renting a game before you buy it.
3. If there are inappropriate themes on the cover of the game or in its advertising, it’s safe to assume the game is also inappropriate.
4. Look for games you can play with another person.
5. Opt for mentally stimulating games.
6. Try to limit your game-playing time. There’s a whole world outside of that television or computer screen to discover.

also a gateway into a world of deceit and evil. Because the Internet is becoming so essential in school and in work situations, we need to learn to safely access and use the good things the Internet can bring to our families.

The Internet is valuable for students, even those in elementary school, saving students hours of research in public libraries. The United States Department of Commerce recently released findings

on a study of Internet use. A spokesperson said, "The Internet is becoming a vital tool in our daily lives, from international business transactions to keeping in touch with family members. Each year, being connected becomes more critical to economic and educational advancement and to community participation" (Department of Commerce news release, Oct. 16, 2000).

One example of the Internet's potential for good is the official Church Web site (www.lds.org), with general conference talks from the past four years; all the back issues—more than 30 years' worth—plus current issues of the Church magazines; the scriptures, with a simple way to search for individual verses using key words; current curriculum manuals; and news and current events of the Church. Information is available in several languages.

As with other areas in our lives, we have to find ways to use the Internet for worthy purposes and avoid what is bad on it. It can be a tool for great good, connecting us to the far reaches of the globe and spreading good and valuable information.



Don't even glance

"Don't let the wrong kinds of books, pictures, and other reading material be near you to tempt you to take even the slightest glance. Such materials can intoxicate your mind just as surely as liquor and drugs can intoxicate and destroy your body" (Ensign, Nov. 1985, 48).

—Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve



TV LISTINGS

QUICK STATS ON MEDIA MORALITY

- Sexual references per hour on American television more than tripled from 1989 to 1999, according to a study by the Parents' Television Council.
- The same study showed bad language becoming about five times more frequent in the same time period.
- Television networks averaged one scene containing sexual behavior every four minutes during the 1998–99 season.



Watch what you watch

“It is very unreasonable to suppose that exposure to profanity, nudity, sex, and violence has no negative effects on us. We can’t roll around in the mud without getting dirty” (Ensign, Nov. 1996, 40).

—Elder
Joe J. Christensen
Emeritus Member of
the Seventy

Some guidelines for using the Internet:

• **Your computer has an Off switch.** You may have heard horror stories about someone coming upon a pornographic site, and when they try to exit it, the computer cycles through a series of disgusting pictures. This doesn’t need to happen. If, at any time, you accidentally come across anything you do not want to see, just turn the computer off. This is a guaranteed way of leaving the site immediately.

• **You are in control.** In general, you have to be looking for inappropriate sites to find them. Only on rare occasions will you access an inappropriate site accidentally. Accidental access is usually caused by misspelling a Web address. But remember, you have the Off switch.

• **Educate parents.** Young people seem unafraid of computers and have become adept at using them. Take time to help your parents better understand the computer and the Internet if they aren’t already familiar with them.

• **Keep the computer in a public place.** Set up the computer in a place where the family regularly can see what is happening on the screen.

• **Don’t believe everything you read.** Just as with books or magazines, you can’t believe everything. Being in print doesn’t make it fact. The same is true of the Internet. Just because it’s on the Internet doesn’t make it true. Consider the source of the information.

• **Don’t give out personal information.** Family members should not give out their address, telephone number, social security number, credit card number, name, or location, without a parent’s permission.

• **Discuss family rules for computer use.** Decide as a family how much time can be spent on the computer and how it will be used.

• **Don’t post pictures on a public Web site.** Use e-mail to send photos to friends and family. Don’t put family pictures on a Web site that anyone can access.



- The average American child will see more than 200,000 violent acts on television before age 18.
- Three major national studies—conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health, the American Medical Association, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control—have shown that viewing violence increases violent behavior.
- Hollywood films average about 46 violent acts per film, according to a recent survey of movies by the Center for Media and Public Affairs.





Movies, TV, and Video Games

You wouldn't go rifling through a trash can hoping to find a good meal, so why would you go to media with unwholesome content? Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, of the Quorum of the Twelve, says we should take the counsel of the prophets as a word of wisdom for our minds. "Just as we exercise great care about what we take into our bodies through our mouths, we should exert a similar vigilance about what we take into our minds through our eyes and ears" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 77).

Spiritual sensitivity, wise judgment, and the courage to just walk out are the best ways to be sure your media diet isn't full of trash and you are living a mental word of wisdom. **NE**



"R" means don't rationalize

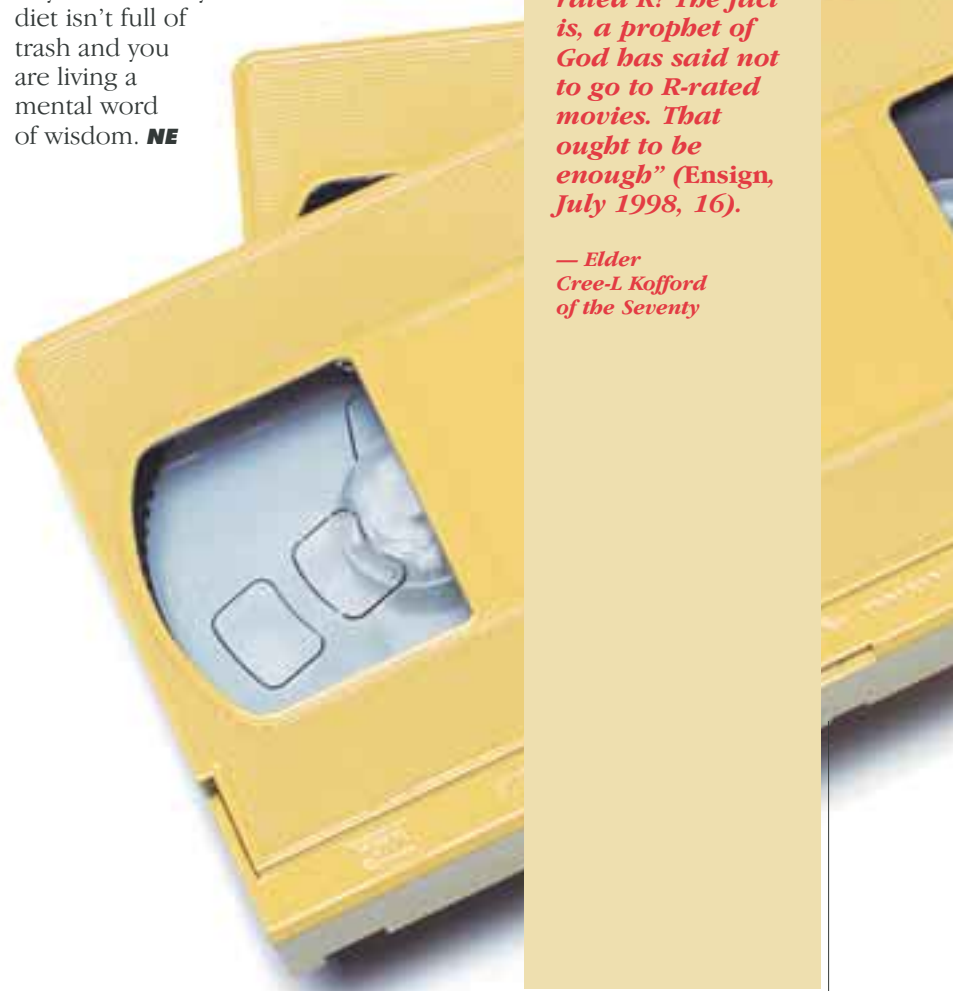
"What difference does it make why it is rated R? The fact is, a prophet of God has said not to go to R-rated movies. That ought to be enough" (Ensign, July 1998, 16).

— Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy

QUICK STATS ON MEDIA HABITS

- On average, children who are eight years of age and older consume more than six and a half hours of media outside of school each day.
- Most children watch about 28 hours of TV a week.
- By the time the average American is 65, he or she will have watched the equivalent of nine straight years of television.

Editor's Note: "Media" is defined as TV, radio, Internet, movies, and video games.



Q & A

“I know kids who break the commandments because they say they can repent later. They seem to have fun, and I don’t see them suffering for it. Meanwhile, I work hard to live Church standards, but I don’t see that I’m any better off. What am I doing wrong?”

NEW ERA

If you are striving to live the commandments, you are doing what is right.

The gospel is designed to bring true happiness. If you are living the commandments and feel you are missing out on all the fun, you may not be enjoying righteousness as the Lord intended. And you may not recognize the harm deliberate sinners are inflicting on themselves and others.

Those who break commandments and say they will repent later have been lured into one of Satan’s traps. It may seem like they are having a good time, but as Alma told his son Corianton, “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

President Ezra Taft Benson said, “Satan would have you believe that happiness comes only as you surrender to his enticements, but one only needs to look at the shattered lives of those who violate God’s laws to know why Satan is called the Father of Lies” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 30).

Elder Richard G. Scott explained why sinning now with the idea of repenting later is so dangerous. “The thought of

Our actions have eternal consequences.

True happiness can only be found by living the gospel.

Those who break commandments and say they will repent later have been lured into one of Satan’s traps.

“Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

Not all effects of sin are immediate or visible to others.

When someone sins with the idea of repenting later, it trivializes the Savior’s sacrifice.

READERS

If you are trying your best, you are doing nothing wrong. You are doing what the Lord has asked all of us to do. Remember, the consequences of our choices and actions do not always come immediately, and sometimes not even in this life. Just as you cannot always see the bad consequences that will come to those youth due to their wrong choices, you often cannot see the blessings that come in consequence of your good and righteous choices.

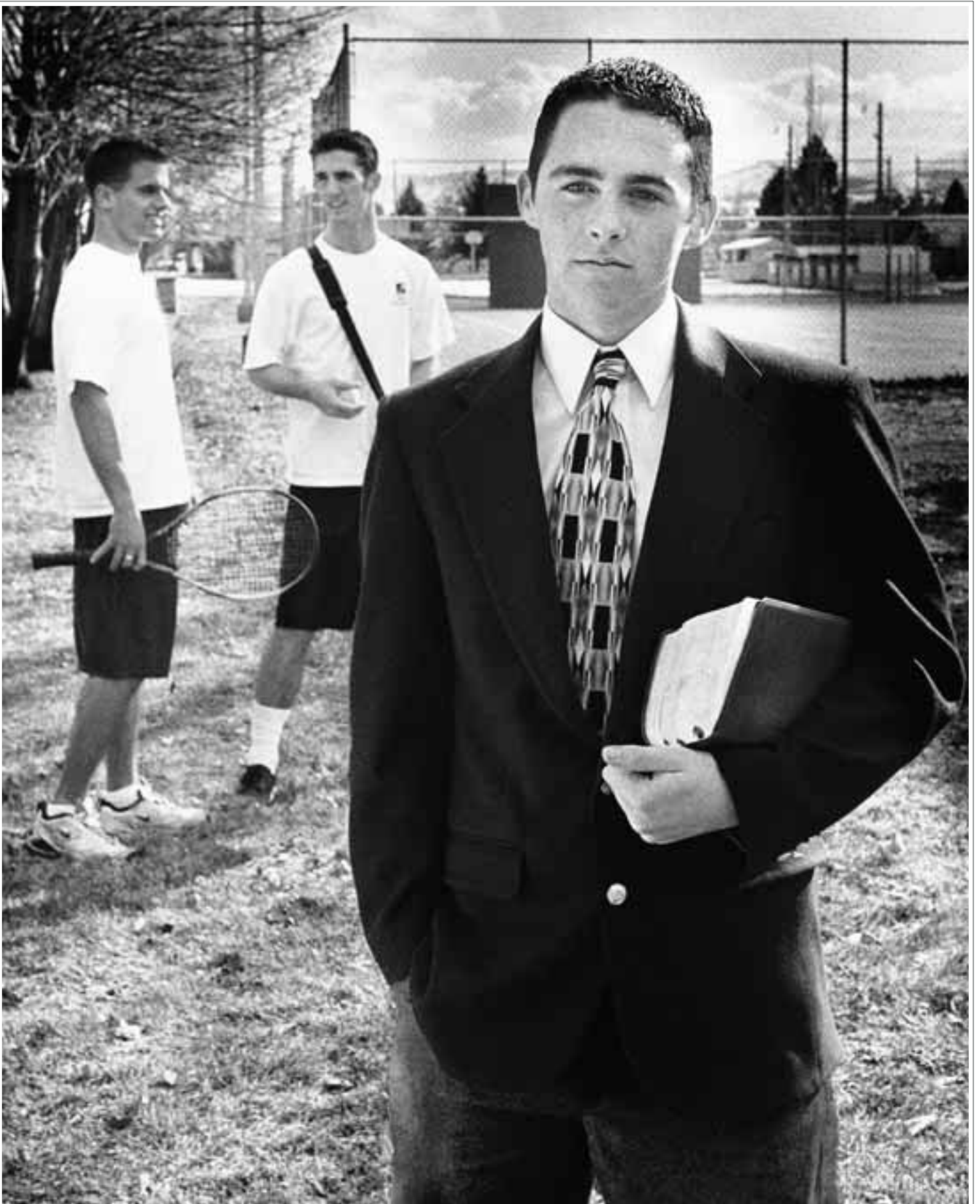
Emily Speakman, 16
Fillmore, Utah



Two wrongs don’t make a right. Just because other people don’t follow the commandments doesn’t mean it’s right. Do what you believe is right and keep on following the commandments.

Robin Hake, 12
Jourdanton, Texas





intentionally committing serious sin now and repenting later is perilously wrong. . . . Many start that journey of intentional transgression and never make it back. Premeditated sin has greater penalties and is harder to overcome” (*New Era*, Oct. 1995, 8).

Jesus Christ lived a sinless life and died so that we could be forgiven. When someone sins with the idea of repenting later, it trivializes the Savior’s sacrifice.

Often, sin involves more than one person. Although you may have intentions of repenting, you cannot be assured that those you bring down with you will make it back. And although you may plan to repent, sin desensitizes you to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Once desensitized, you may lose the desire to repent.

Not all effects of sin are immediate or visible to others. Faith is required to understand that our actions have eternal consequences. President James E. Faust said, “The more faithfully we keep the commandments of God, the happier we will generally be” (*Ensign*, Oct. 2000, 2).

Although your friends may seem happy, you must have faith that living the standards of the Church will bring true happiness. As President Faust said, “Pleasure is often confused with happiness but is by no means synonymous with it” (*Ensign*, Oct. 2000, 2).

It’s hard to be happy keeping the commandments if part of you wishes you could be doing what your friends are doing. So avoid unwholesome conversations, situations, movies—anything that dwells on sin or makes it look fun or glamorous. When tempting thoughts come, don’t let them linger. Pray for a change of heart. Seek the companionship of the Spirit in prayer, fasting, and scripture study. Through the Spirit, our Heavenly Father whispers His loving approval. And that is where true and lasting happiness comes from. **NE**

Answers are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.



“Some youth foolishly rationalize that it is ‘no big deal’ to sin now because they can always repent later. . . . The idea of sinning a little is self-deception. Sin is sin! Sin weakens you spiritually, and it always places the sinner at eternal risk” (*New Era*, Feb. 1994, 6).

—Elder
M. Russell Ballard
of the Quorum of
the Twelve

Keeping the commandments and living Church standards may be hard work, but the benefits are well worth it. Plus, you’ll come to know true joy, not Satan’s imitation.

Elder Trenton Hamson, 20
Tennessee Nashville Mission



If wickedness did bring happiness, there would be no need for our Savior and His marvelous plan.

Heidi Linford, 16
Ontario, Oregon



I don’t think people who are breaking the commandments are happy, and it’s not important what other people are doing anyway. If I don’t do what I’m supposed to do, I won’t have the opportunity to return to live with Heavenly Father.

Dennis Valgren, 13
Copenhagen, Denmark



HELP Q&A BE OF HELP

You can help make Q&A helpful by answering the question below. Please mail your answers before August 1, 2001, to Q&A, *New Era*, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150. Print or type your name, age, city, and state with each answer. Also, please include a snapshot of yourself. This will not be returned. If your answer is of a sensitive nature, your name may be withheld from publication.

QUESTION

Some people say I’m dating before 16. My friend and I don’t date yet. We just hang out after school until my mom comes home from work. We are together a lot, but we don’t date. Isn’t this okay?



PUT IT ON

**THE ENEMY'S AIMING AT YOU.
PROTECT YOURSELF.
(See Ephesians 6:11-18.)**

SET IN STONE

They are so serious about their promise that it's sealed in the cornerstone of their temple.

In Alaska, LDS teenagers who live in the towns of Wasilla, Palmer, and Eagle River look at the Anchorage Alaska Temple and know that something of theirs is safe inside. They were fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time to make a promise, sign their names to it, then have those pledges sealed inside the cornerstone of the temple at the dedication.

The promise they signed was quite short. It said simply: "As I prepare for marriage and a mission, I will live the standards of worthiness for entrance into the house of the Lord." It was a promise that many of them were willing to make, but now that the promise is literally

encased in stone in the temple and sealed with mortar, these young people have taken it very seriously.

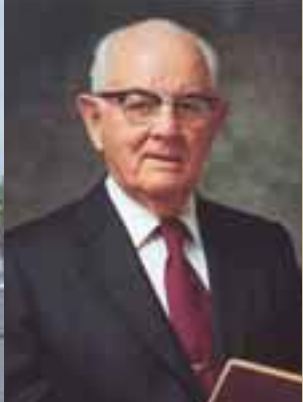
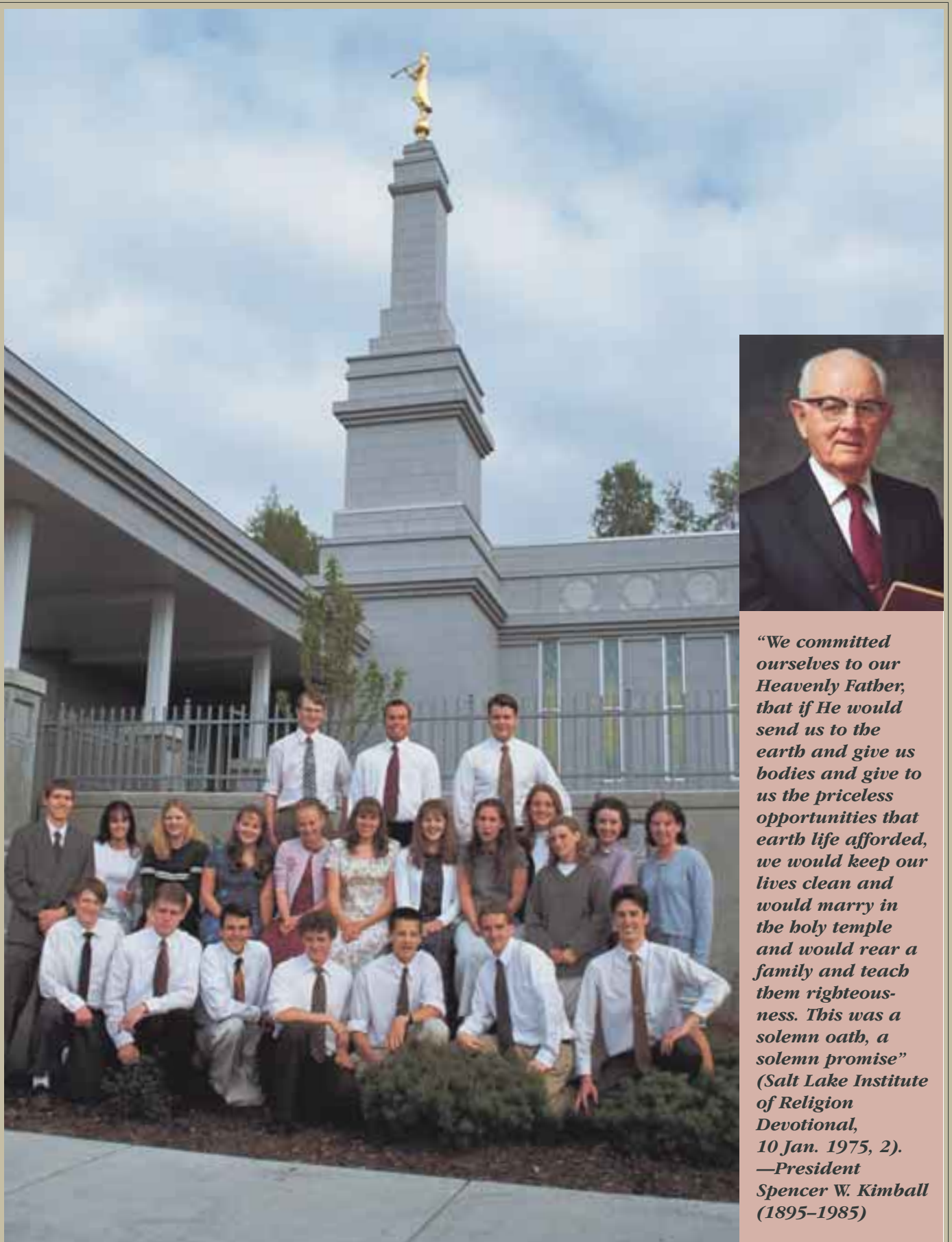
"This was a goal I had previously made," says Katie Green of the Eagle River Second Ward, "but had never put on paper. When I was given the opportunity to do so, I jumped at it. I didn't just sign it; I pondered it. To me a promise is a promise and cannot be broken, especially with our Father in Heaven. Living the standards of worthiness doesn't mean just not crossing the line. It means that we must live as far away from that line as possible."

Making it personal

For Amie Uscola of the Wasilla First Ward, making a promise like this one is very personal. "Having my name in the cornerstone of the temple is like an agreement on a personal basis with the Lord. It is like a possession of His, and if you broke it, it is more personal. I actually do think about it every time I

Every time they see the Anchorage Alaska Temple, these teens are reminded of the promise they made always to remain worthy to enter the temple.

by Janet Thomas



“We committed ourselves to our Heavenly Father, that if He would send us to the earth and give us bodies and give to us the priceless opportunities that earth life afforded, we would keep our lives clean and would marry in the holy temple and would rear a family and teach them righteousness. This was a solemn oath, a solemn promise”
(Salt Lake Institute of Religion Devotional, 10 Jan. 1975, 2).
—President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985)



“Signing this promise was simply a unique way of recommitting ourselves on a more personal level, much like renewing covenants every Sunday in sacrament meeting. This promise offered me a new chance to recommit myself to the standards I may have faltered in obeying. It redefined the covenants I’ve made and gave me renewed purpose to become prepared to enter the temple, go on my mission, and get married.”

—Ryan Rampton,
16, Eagle River
Second Ward,
Wasilla Alaska
Stake

come here.”

These teens are thrilled to have a temple so close to their hometowns. Before the Anchorage Alaska Temple was built, these teens only rarely, if ever, had the opportunity to travel to a temple. The trips were expensive and often a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Now they have many more opportunities to do baptisms and to go through the temple for their own endowments before leaving on missions or being married. Ryan Rampton of the Eagle River Second Ward said, “With something as sacred as doing temple ordinances, now I won’t have to go to another state. I can do it in the place I grew up. That actually means a lot to me.”

Having signed a pledge that is now permanently in the temple’s cornerstone makes coming to the temple even better. “The feelings I get whenever I enter the temple,” says ShaLene Grover of the Palmer First Ward, “make the desires of my heart stronger to be a better person. This makes a difference in my life, to always be worthy to go to the temple, so I can always feel the peace I feel when going there.”

Keeping the promise

Just exactly what can these teens do to keep the promise they signed?

Katie Green’s friends know she has standards that she lives. They even know about the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet that outlines and explains just what those standards are. And they like it that when they are with Katie, they have a friend who will help them be a little bit better instead of a little bit worse.

Attending Church meetings and seminary makes it easier. Christy Kendall of the Eagle River First Ward explained how she received an answer as to how she was supposed to act. “It was a lesson when I was a Mia Maid that said you need to make a decision now so that when evil things confront you, you will have a definite answer ready. From then on, *For the Strength of Youth* became my handbook. It wasn’t just words to me because now I knew that was how I

needed to act. Those were my answers that I needed to say when confronted.”

And staying worthy of a temple recommend also prepares these young people to serve the Lord. “The promise I made with my Heavenly Father,” says Austin Wallace of the Eagle River Second Ward, “has influenced my life. I strive to live worthy to enter the temple. I know that if I am temple worthy I am also mission worthy.”

Austin has always followed the good examples set by his friends. He says, “My friends are still the people I look up to. Their testimonies shine through me because I’ve emulated them in all they’ve done.” Austin’s best friend is serving a full-time mission, and Austin is preparing to serve also. “I’ve just loved the Church so much. Now that I’ve seen the choices my friends have made, it’s part of my own personal choice to do the same.”

A constant reminder

The Anchorage Alaska Temple is not large, but its light-gray granite walls catch the light. It’s easy to see from one of the main highways. Tim Miner of the Palmer First Ward sees the temple when he has to go that way to get to work. And he remembers his promise.

And Tisha Harman of the Wasilla Second Ward remembers her pledge. She even remembers where her name was among the dozens of other signatures on the sheet.

Dené Christensen of the Eagle River Second Ward says, “When you really think about it, having your name sealed in a cornerstone in the house of the Lord is just amazing. You don’t want to do anything wrong. You don’t want to tarnish or damage any part of that temple. Then I remember that my name’s in there.”

Even though these teens were the right age and at the right place to sign a pledge to remain worthy to enter the temple, Emerson Fry of the Palmer Second Ward reminds us all, “Whether or not you sign a paper, I hope that everyone makes the same promise to themselves and to God.” **NE**



“I was able to sign the pledge that is placed in the cornerstone of the temple. By signing I was able to make a promise that I will always be worthy to enter the temple. Just to think that one day I will be able to enter the temple knowing that I have been worthy brings me joy and happiness.”

—Crystal Eriksson, 17, Wasilla Second Ward, Wasilla Alaska Stake

Passing

What would my parents think of me? My little brother and sister? I was supposed to be their example.

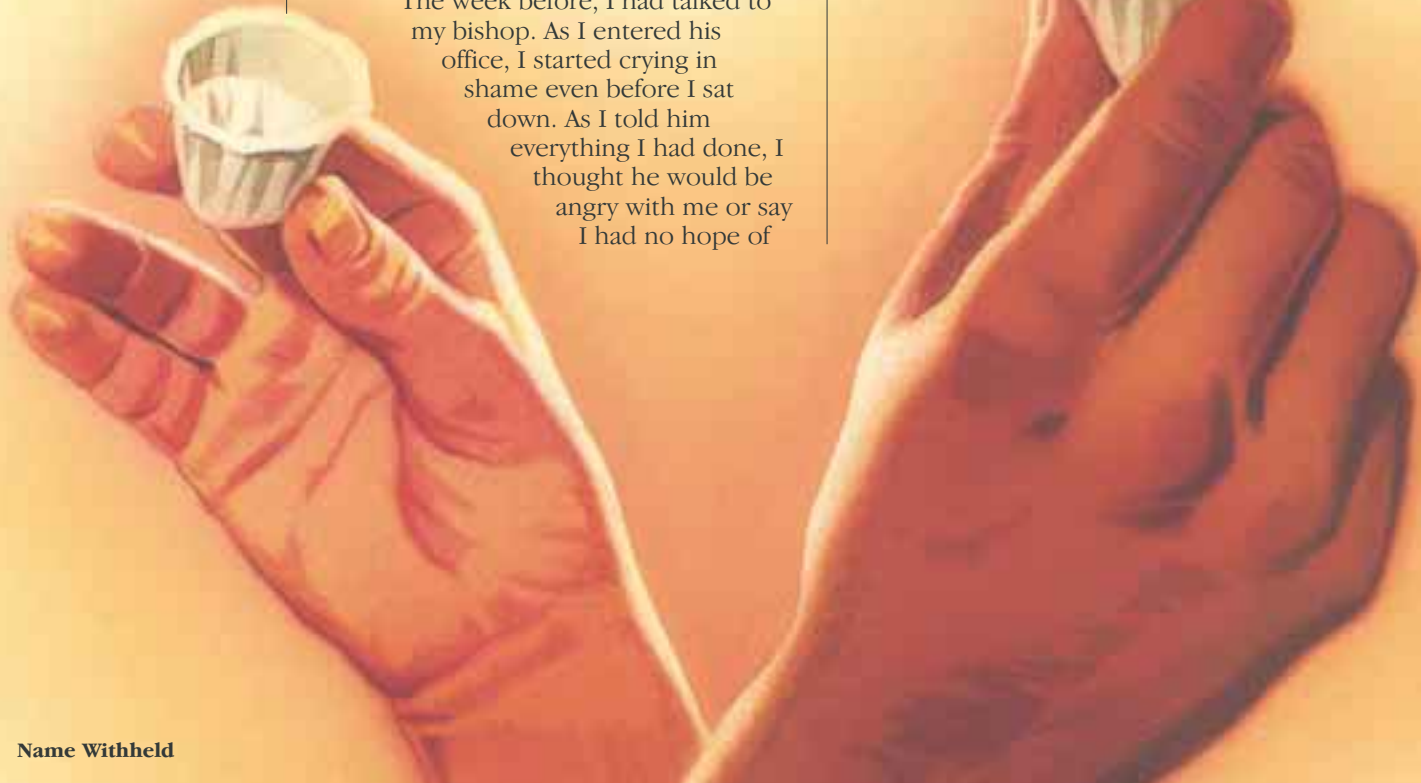
As I watched the shiny tray come down my aisle, I couldn't help but feel embarrassed. This would be the first time in my life that I hadn't been worthy to take the sacrament. The tray was quickly coming closer to me, and I was drowning in all my feelings. What would my parents think when I didn't take the sacrament? My little brother and sister? I was supposed to be their example.

As the tray came to me, I quickly passed it on, bowing my head. I felt as if everyone in the whole chapel was looking at me.

The week before, I had talked to my bishop. As I entered his office, I started crying in shame even before I sat down. As I told him everything I had done, I thought he would be angry with me or say I had no hope of

being forgiven. Instead, I noticed he was crying too. He let me know he was very pleased I had come to him. It felt so good to know he wanted to help with my problems and that I had someone to talk to.

When I finally stood up to leave, my bishop told me he loved me and assured me, "I am going to help you as much as I can to overcome all of your problems." At that moment I knew everything would eventually be all right.



Name Withheld

It By



My first time not taking the sacrament was hard, but I have to relive the experience every Sunday as I pass the tray on. I am grateful to have the blessing of repentance in my life. I know that when I have completed the repentance process, I will be clean again. And because of this experience and the struggles I am going through, I never want to be unworthy again. Not taking the sacrament is hard. But it has helped me more fully appreciate my Savior's sacrifice for me. **NE**



A MOST SACRED ORDINANCE



“The weekly opportunity of partaking of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is one of the most sacred ordinances of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is further indication of His love for all of us. Associated with the partaking of the sacrament are principles that are fundamental to man’s advancement and exaltation in the kingdom of God and the shaping of one’s spiritual character. We should reflect in our own weekday conduct the spiritual renewal and commitments made on Sunday.

We may fail to recognize the deep spiritual significance this ordinance offers to each of us personally. Is it possible that a casual attitude on our part of routine formality of this sacred occasion might deaden our opportunity for spiritual growth?

“We all have regrets for words or deeds or thoughts from Sabbath to Sabbath that we would like to erase from our souls. Perhaps we have erred against someone or injured them; or, if there is ill feeling in our heart, we should repent, obtain forgiveness from those affected or transgressed against, then humbly, with a contrite spirit, prepare ourselves to be worthy to partake of the sacrament. If we have sincerely repented, we can be forgiven, and spiritual healing can come to our souls. You and I have felt it” (*Ensign*, May 1983, 14).

—Elder David B. Haight
of the Quorum of
the Twelve



High FASHION

It wasn't Milan or Paris, but the show these Louisiana youth put on was more than a modest success.

When you think about being fashionably dressed, you probably think about exotic places—places like Milan, London, Paris, and New York. Or, if you're not into high fashion, you might think about places a little closer to home. Perhaps the local shopping mall or discount store are the first places that pop into your mind when you need new clothes.

But it's probably pretty safe to say that no matter who you are, when you think about new clothes, Slidell, Louisiana, doesn't figure into your thoughts.

Unless, of course, Slidell is where you live.

Location, location

Some of the youth in Slidell were having a difficult time keeping the standard of wearing modest clothing. And while it's true that modesty can be a challenge no matter where you live, in Slidell it can be particularly difficult.

"It gets very hot here," says Kelly Skinner. "Even when you know your standards, it can be a temptation to wear immodest clothing."

And it's not just the weather that makes it difficult.

"Most of us go to school with just one or two other members," says Kristen Davis. "Sometimes you feel like you're the only one who is trying to be modest."

by Lisa M. G. Crockett





The Slidell youth participated by touting the benefits of making correct choices by wearing appropriate clothing. They then promised to continue doing so by signing a modesty agreement.



It can make you feel kind of weird.”

Many of the youth in Slidell were wearing modest clothing despite the challenges. But with fashion trends leaning toward short, sleeveless, or otherwise inappropriate styles, the Slidell Louisiana Stake youth committee decided to take action.

“We tried to find a way to make modest dressing fun,” says Kristen.

On the catwalk

As the youth committee met together to find a solution to the problem of immodest and inappropriate dress, they talked about why the youth in their stake might choose clothing that isn’t in keeping with Church standards.

“First, we decided that part of the problem is that to find modest clothing, you have to work a little harder,” says Kristen, who serves on the youth committee. “In most stores, there will be lots of immodest choices and only a few modest ones.”

But the youth committee knew there were ways to dress well without compromising standards. After all, most of them were doing it successfully—their closets were full of good examples. And what better way to demonstrate good fashion sense than by putting on a fashion show?

“None of us who are participating as models went out and bought new clothes,” says Shawna Windom. “We all just went to our closets and pulled out things that we wear all the time.”

In it together

But the fashion show was only part of the answer to this problem.

“It can be really hard to keep your standards when you feel as if you’re the only one doing it,” says Aaron Martin, another youth committee member. “We wanted to somehow create a feeling of unity so that when the people from our stake are at school, they’ll remember that they’re not living the standards all by themselves.”

So Aaron talked with other youth in his ward, and he and his friend Jacob Snell read *For the Strength of Youth*. Then he and Jacob wrote a contract of sorts; those who signed it would agree to live the dress standards they outlined.

“Some guys think that modesty is only a standard for girls to keep,” says Jacob. “But how you dress sends messages to other people, and that’s true for boys and girls. It shows other people that you respect them, as well as yourself, when you dress appropriately.”

Dressed up with someplace to go

The night of the fashion show, the runway is ready, the refreshments are waiting, and there is a bit of chaos in the dressing rooms. With youth modeling everything from jeans to prom dresses and tuxedos, it’s hard to navigate the hallways. But even with all the excitement, it’s easy to see that the youth are not only modestly dressed but fashionably dressed as well.

Homemade *New Era* posters, touting the benefits of dressing modestly and appropriately, line the cultural hall walls. The lights dim slightly, and the music begins to play. Boys model clothing suitable for hiking—shorts that reach the knees and heavy boots—as well as appropriate attire for passing the sacrament. Girls wear everything from jeans and sneakers to dresses for the spring formal.

When the show ends, everyone has a chance to sign the modesty agreement. As a reminder of the promise they’ve made, everyone receives a CTR ring. Throughout the year, the agreement will be displayed at stake dances and other events to remind the youth of what they’ve agreed to.

“Being in this program has made me think a little differently about making



clothing choices,” says Krystina Quist. “I think I’m more careful about what I choose when I’m in the store now.”

Many of the young men also felt that the fashion show was a worthwhile effort.

“I’m glad we did this activity,” says Bradley Hogan. “I feel good when I follow the standards, and I’m glad this might help other people do it too.”

Back to the trenches

For most of the youth in Slidell, the fashion show and modesty agreement won’t mean a huge change. Perhaps just a few items of clothing will be thrown out or forgotten, and maybe a little more thought will go into clothing selection. But for the most part, this lesson was just an enhancement for an already great group of youth.

“The kids at school know who we are,” says Shawna. “They watch what we do, and dressing modestly just makes us seem like a class act.”

So from now on, when you seek fashion inspiration, you might look a little further than pictures of runway models wearing the creations of fancy designers. Think about a youth group in Louisiana helping each other stay strong. Then think about yourself and the clothes hanging in your closet. They may not be high fashion, but if they are in keeping with high standards, it will be just the kind of style you want. **NE**

STAY SAFE

Satan is real. And when his temptations constantly surround you, keeping Church standards can become difficult. One of the best ways to follow those standards is to not only resist temptation but to completely avoid situations where you will be tempted. Although such situations may appear to be acceptable or harmless, they are inevitably a foot in the door for Satan's influence. Here are some practical ways to keep Church standards—just some sensible behaviors that will help keep you away from temptation and out of trouble.

- * Have a definite plan. If you have a well-thought-out plan for activities, it's less likely you will feel pressured into doing something you don't want to do at the last minute.
- * When you hang out with your friends, don't pair off. The letter of the law says you shouldn't date before you are 16. You are much safer if you extend the spirit of that standard to your behavior in all your interactions with the opposite sex.
- * If inappropriate sites on the Internet are a temptation, be sure someone else is in the room when you're on the computer.
- * Avoid being alone in a house or other secluded area with a member of the opposite sex who is not a family member. It is never appropriate to be alone in a bedroom with such a person.
- * Give your parents the four W's: Where you will be, Who you will be with, What you will be doing, and When you will be home.
- * Don't put yourself at risk. Don't go to parties where alcohol is served or where other inappropriate activities occur.
- * When you're tired, your judgment becomes clouded. Talk to your parents and set a specific, reasonable time for a curfew.
- * Never knowingly expose yourself to temptation of any kind, no matter how strong you think you are. **NE**

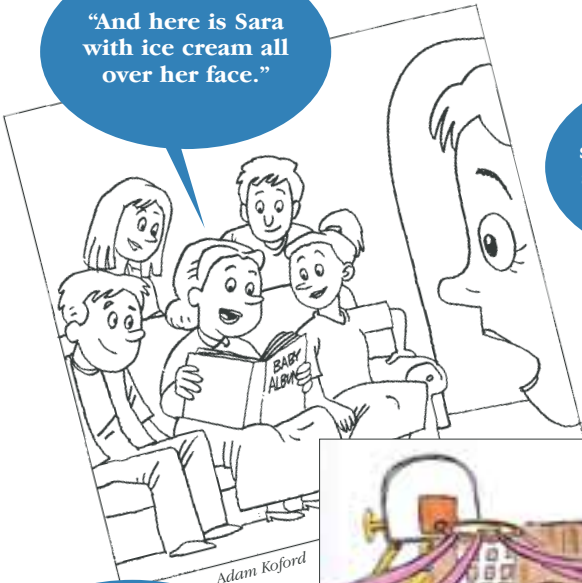
GOT ANY BRIGHT IDEAS?



As a teenager, your life is changing all the time. What are some ways you deal with the big changes in your life? Send your ideas to Idea List, *New Era*, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84150. Or e-mail us at cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org. Please send your ideas by August 1, 2001.

T H E E X T R A S M I L E

"And here is Sara with ice cream all over her face."



Adam Koford

"My dad told me to save for my mission, so I figured I'd do it all at once."



Chris Deaver

Sara learns to never leave her friends waiting again.



Val Chadwick Bagley

"Happy birthday, Dad. It's a paperweight."



Val Chadwick Bagley

SPEAKING OF

The night had gone well, and we seemed to like each other, so I tried to kiss her good-night—and missed!

I was 16 when a cousin of mine set me up with her friend. At that time I didn't consider a kiss to be a very meaningful thing. I thought that kissing a date good-night was just a way of saying thank you for the date if both of us had enjoyed being together.

As I picked up my date and spent time with her, I was impressed by both her looks and her personality. We seemed to be having a great time together. Sometime during the date, I started debating whether or not I should kiss her good-night.

Before the date was over, I decided



Kissing



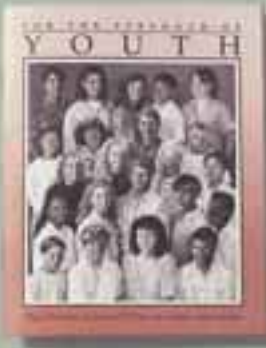
Actually, I didn't really miss. She simply moved. At first I was embarrassed. But then I came to a very important realization.

by Bruce Monson

that she was having a good time, she seemed to like me, and kissing her good-night would be okay. After I walked her to her door and we talked for a while, I attempted to kiss her. As I did, she moved just enough so that I “missed.” She turned the attempted kiss into a hug, as if that was what I had meant it to be. She thanked me for the date and went inside.

She had subtly made it look like the hug was all I had intended, but it did not feel very subtle at the time. I thought the people waiting in the car had probably noticed, and I was embarrassed. But mostly I felt like I had blown it. She was a fun girl, and I thought she would never want to go out with me again because I had tried to kiss her when she did not want to be kissed.

The next day I went to see my cousin, and she excitedly asked how the date had gone. I told her about the great time I had, but also said that her friend would probably never want to go out with me



FOR THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

The General Authorities have given guidelines that can help you understand where you should draw lines you will not cross. *For the Strength of Youth* advises you to not date before you are 16 years old, to go out in groups when you do date, and to avoid pairing off exclusively with one partner. President Gordon B. Hinckley has told youth, “When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, then is the time to become so involved. But you boys who are in high school don’t need this, and neither do the girls” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 51).

I realized that I had been asking her to choose between her standards and what I wanted. I promised myself that I would never again put a young woman in that situation.

again. I explained what had happened and said I was very anxious to know how her friend felt. I asked my cousin if she would call her friend to inquire about the date. The response of my date surprised me. She told my cousin that she had fun, but she was sure I wouldn’t want to go out with her again. It had not even occurred to me that she might think I’d be upset at her for turning her head. She went on to explain to my cousin that she just didn’t believe in kissing on the first date. That was a moment of change in my life.

I decided if an impressive girl like her chose not to kiss on the first date, I would never kiss on the first date either. But something more important occurred to me later as I thought about those events. I realized that I had been asking her to choose between her standards and what I wanted. That bothered me a lot. I did not think of myself as that kind of person. I promised myself I would never

again put a young woman in that situation.

What it means for you

In observing the students I have taught in seminary over the last two decades, I noticed more and more youth choosing to carefully follow the instructions found in *For the Strength of Youth*.

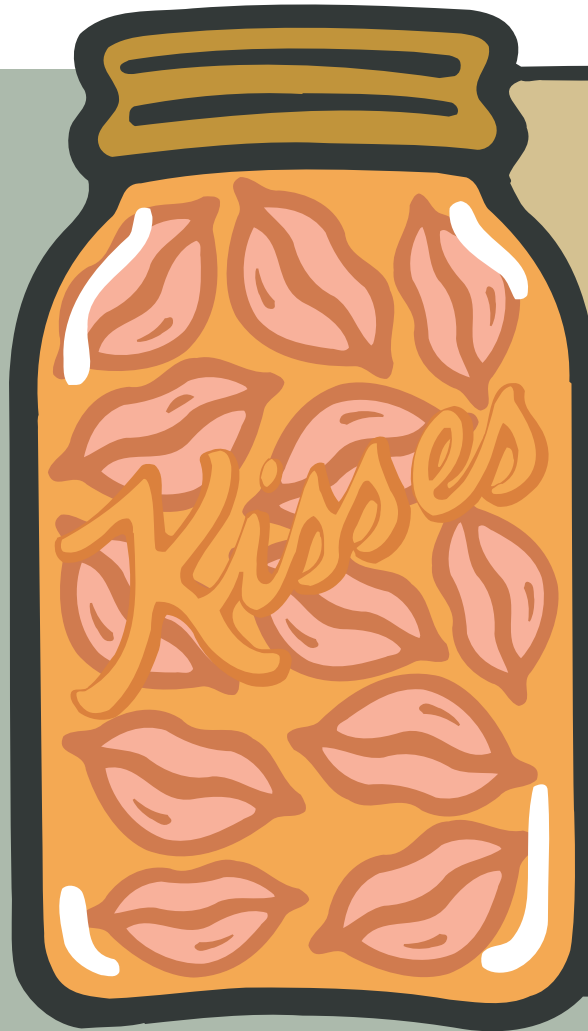
President Spencer W. Kimball stated, “Kissing has . . . degenerated to develop and express lust instead of affection, honor, and admiration. To kiss in casual dating is asking for trouble. What do kisses mean when handed out like pretzels and robbed of sacredness?” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 281).

Since President Hinckley has asked youth not to become steadily involved with one person while in high school, does that mean that kissing while in high school is unwise? I had not heard President Kimball’s counsel while I was dating, but fortunately some personal experiences taught me the truth of his advice. After I graduated from high school, I thought a lot about how special kisses should be.

I have more and more students each year in my seminary classes express the desire to follow President Kimball’s counsel and save their kisses. There are many who have decided to stop kissing in their dating relationships and wait for a time when it can be more meaningful. I have children who have chosen to follow that advice, and I have seen the blessings that flow from it. If you will be determined to save your kisses for the appropriate time, and follow the guidelines set for us by prophets, you will reap the joy and peace that come from keeping sacred things sacred. You will also avoid the great sorrow and heartache that come from falling into the trap of immorality.

Don’t give up what you want most for something you want now. If, as Mormon tells his son, virtue is most precious and dear above all things (see Moro. 9:9), then it is worth sacrificing for. **NE**

"How Much Kissing Is Too Much?"



This question is catchy and interesting—but the “how much” approach is the wrong way to look at this issue. The first kiss given by a girl I know to a certain fellow [was one too many], because it led to many more and to a miserable marriage.

The important questions are these: Whom should I kiss? Why? Under what circumstances?

Many things around you encourage you to give affection, such as your physical maturity, movies, advertising, music, stories, articles, and conversation. Granted this is the trend of the day. But there are good reasons why you should be discriminating and self-controlled in your giving of affection. As you are aware, kissing is more stimulating than satisfying; consequently, it invites more and more. Once a couple begins to share affection in a physical way, this activity tends to become the focus of interest. Often such a couple ceases to

explore the other significant dimensions of personality: mind, character, maturity, religious faith, moral values, and goals.

Affection should grow out of genuine friendship and brotherly love, not precede them, if one wishes to be sure of having real and lasting love in marriage. Kissing for the sake of kissing invites more affection, and many fine young people become more deeply involved than they actually wish to be.

Affection should never be sought after as an end in itself, because this does violence to a person.

Excerpted from Lowell Bennion, Q&A, New Era, Feb. 1971, 5–6.

Save your affections for the appropriate time. Affection should grow out of genuine friendship and love, not precede them, if you want real and lasting love in marriage.



COUNSEL FROM THE PROPHET

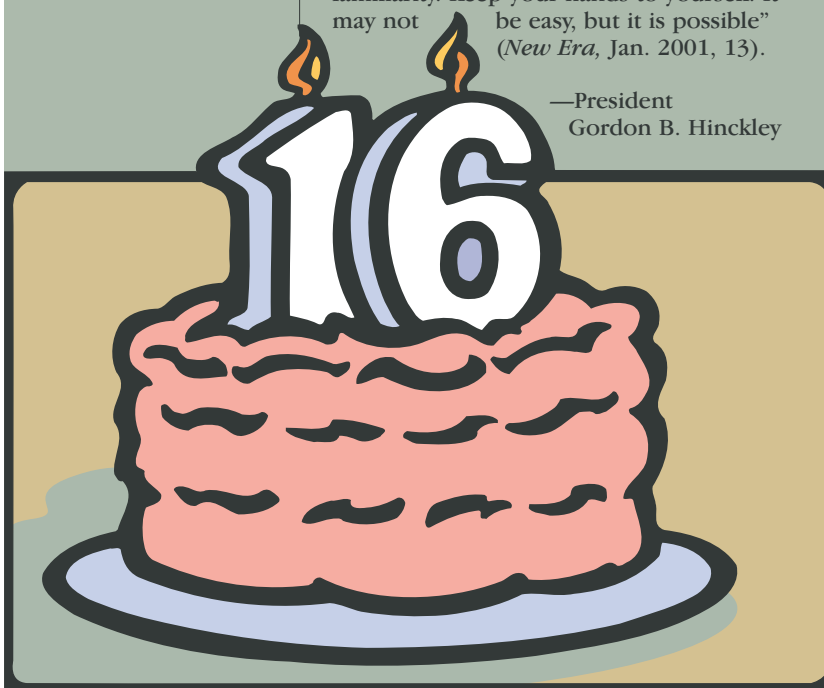
“The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control. It is beautiful when handled in the right way. It is deadly if it gets out of hand.

“It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating. This rule is not designed to hurt you in any way. It is designed to help you, and it will do so if you will observe it.

“Steady dating at an early age leads so often to tragedy. Studies have shown that the longer a boy and girl date one another, the more likely they are to get into trouble.

“It is better, my friends, to date a variety of companions until you are ready to marry. Have a wonderful time, but stay away from familiarity. Keep your hands to yourself. It may not be easy, but it is possible”
(New Era, Jan. 2001, 13).

—President
Gordon B. Hinckley



THE FACTS

I recently completed a doctoral dissertation that examined factors that help young people stay morally clean. I used data supplied by LDS and non-LDS juniors in two different high schools. One of the most crucial factors in staying morally clean for these young people was choosing to wait until age 16 to date. While about 70 percent of those who did not date until they were 16 had avoided immoral behavior, more than 80 percent of those who reported dating before age 16 had become sexually involved enough to require a bishop’s help for repentance.

The same kind of statistics held true for those teens who had steady dating partners. Of the 308 11th graders surveyed, 95 reported having a current boyfriend or girlfriend. Of those 95, only six had never been involved in making out (or kissing for a long time), and more than half of them had transgressed the laws of chastity. For all of the students polled, not dating until 16, avoiding steady dating, attending church weekly, and having close relationships with parents and family were important factors in keeping themselves morally clean.

As a seminary teacher, I have occasionally seen young people trying to fit their actions into the letter of Church guidelines while missing the spirit of this counsel. If young people are going to avoid dating until they are 16, and avoid exclusive dating relationships in high school after 16, they should also avoid what might be considered exclusive boyfriend/girlfriend relationships before 16.

by **Bruce Monson**

MY NEW BEGINNING

I regret my past, but my future is bright because of the great lesson I learned.

I am from a tiny town in Georgia. As you might guess, there are very few members of the Church here. In my school, there are five.

I was in seventh grade when my trouble began. All my friends were starting to experiment with alcohol and cigarettes. I was popular back then, so I felt it was my “obligation” to try them. Luckily, I only did it once. I have, however, regretted those spontaneous, thoughtless mistakes every day since. I have also had trials with morality.

This was long ago and my rebellious days are over, but I cannot express the regret I have for those mistakes.

The Atonement has taken on a new meaning in my life. I am now the brunt of many Mormon jokes, but as John 15:19 says, “Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

I have learned to not settle for instant gratification. Many times these mistakes can scar you forever. If only I had thought about that back then.

I will be eternally indebted to my Savior for His endless mercy and love toward me. I am so grateful to be a member of the Church. It has brought me eternal happiness and joy. I look around the halls at my school at all the nonmembers who don’t know what I know, and I feel my testimony grow when I realize who I am—a daughter of God—and where I am going. **NE**

Name Withheld



LITTLE REMINDERS

Besides *For the Strength of Youth*, the Church distribution centers have other materials that can help you remember Church standards. The centers have posters, Young Men and Young Women manuals and supplementary materials to go with them, pictures of the Savior and the prophets, and Church music, among other things. You can visit the distribution center nearest to you or log on to the Online Distribution Center at www.ldscatalog.com for more ideas.

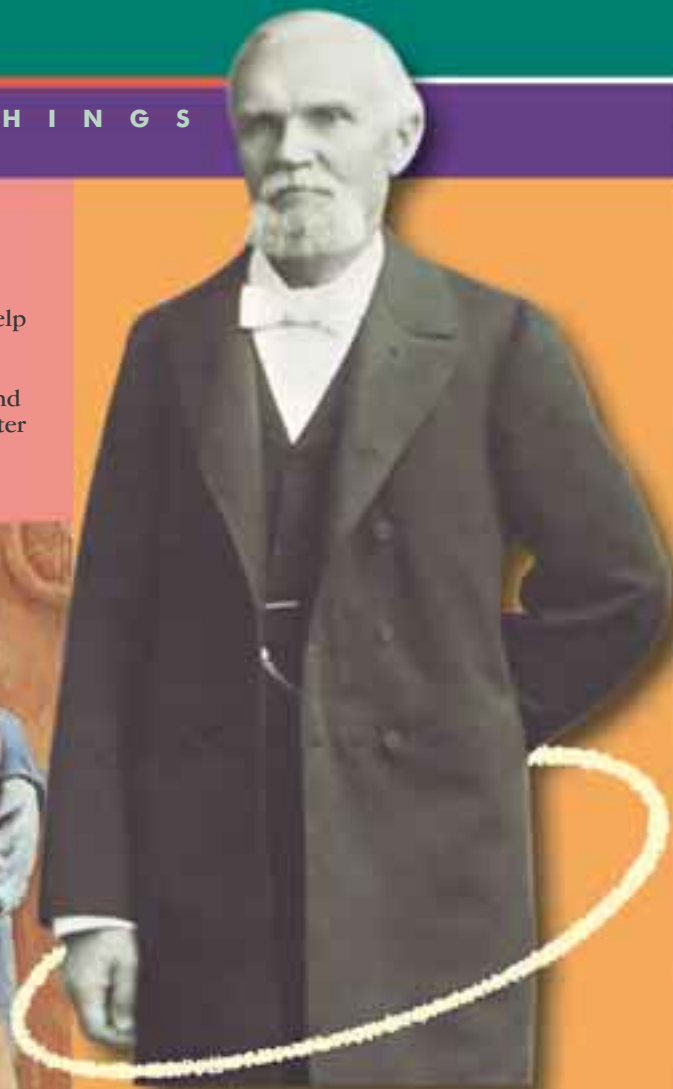


DECIDE ONCE, DECIDE NOW

Now may I make a recommendation? Develop discipline of self so that, more and more, you do not have to decide and redecide what you will do when you are confronted with the same temptation time and time again. You need only to decide some things once. How great a blessing it is to be free of agonizing over and over again regarding a temptation. To do such is time-consuming and very risky.

“There are some things Latter-day Saints do and other things we just don’t do. The sooner you take a stand, the taller you will be!” (*President Kimball Speaks Out*, 1981, 94).

—President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985)



ON YOUR HONOR

Karl G. Maeser was the first president of Brigham Young University. Born in Saxony, Germany, in 1828, he was the first member to be baptized into the restored Church there. In 1860, when Dr. Maeser and his family moved to Utah, he became the private tutor to Brigham Young’s family. Sixteen years later, Brigham Young called Dr. Maeser to organize the Brigham Young Academy.

Not only was Karl G. Maeser known for his intelligence and teaching skills; he was also known for his humility and honesty. In his first address to the new Brigham Young Academy he said, “I have been asked what I mean by word of honor. I will tell you. Place me behind prison walls—walls of stone ever so high, ever so thick, reaching ever so far into the ground—there is a possibility that in some way or another I may be able to escape; but stand me on the floor and draw a chalk line around me and have me give my word of honor never to cross it. Can I get out of that circle? No, never! I’d die first!” (quoted in Emerson West, *Vital Quotations*, 1968, 167).



ARE YOU A STANDARD-BEARER?

Ever wondered why we use the word *standards*? Why not just call them rules?

Centuries ago, a standard was called “the king’s standard.” The king’s standard was a point of reunion for his army and the place where he gave his commands. It was some kind of noticeable object, usually a banner, carried on a pole so all the army could see it and rally to it.

Using the king’s standard as a rallying point for orders led to the word *standard*, meaning something stationary or fixed, something upheld for its permanent value. *The Oxford English Dictionary* says a standard is an exemplar of correctness or perfection.

Many countries have an agency where standards of time, weight, and measure are kept. There, the accuracy of clocks, scales, and other devices can be checked. In a similar way, *For the Strength of Youth* tells us Church standards are “guidelines given to help you measure your conduct.”

Our standards today come from a heavenly king. It is His standard we uphold when we keep the standards of the Church; they are more than just rules. And just as standard things have definite value, so does the counsel of the prophets about dating, media, morality, and all the other standards found in *For the Strength of Youth* and in the scriptures.

When you hold your heavenly standard high for all to see, others can rally to you for the strength that comes from living the standards of the Church.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A

The word 'Supersta' is written in a large, stylized, purple cursive font with a gold outline and a drop shadow effect. The letters are thick and rounded, with a slight slant. The 'S' is particularly large and decorative. The word is positioned diagonally across the upper half of the page.

Everyone said Kim was lucky to be Derek's girlfriend. But a mysterious journal and its unknown author made her wonder.

During her last class that day, Kim had a hard time staying awake. It wasn't too surprising since she'd been out late the night before with Derek.

She looked around for something to keep her eyes open. In the vacant desk across the aisle from her, she noticed a tattered notebook that someone from a previous class must have left. She picked it up and started thumbing through what was some kind of personal journal. There was no name on the cover.

I shouldn't read this, she thought to herself. But she did.

September 11

At church today the bishop talked about chastity. He told us to be faithful to the person you're going to marry even though you don't know who it's going to be. Sounds like maybe a good idea, but it would be a lot easier if I at least knew her name and what state she lived in. I hope she's doing the same thing for me wherever she is. I wonder what she's doing this very minute.

Kim read the entry over again. This is written by a guy, she thought, a guy who goes to church and thinks about chastity. She shook her head. There's nobody like that in this school, at least not that I've ever met.

She forgot about being sleepy and also about Mr. Hadley's lecture as she read the next entry in the journal.

September 15

I've got a chance to get a job after school and on Saturdays. I'd be working

There was no name on the tattered notebook Kim found, but soon she was comparing the author with her so-called ideal boyfriend.

by Jack Weyland



She asked Derek if he knew any basketball players who believed in chastity. "There's nobody like that around here," he said. "That's what I thought too," she said, "but now I think maybe there's at least one." Perhaps the journal would give her more clues.

at Sooper Dooper. If I work, it'll mean I won't be able to go out for basketball so I don't know if I want to do it or not. One thing's for sure, I need to save some money for my mission.

September 21

Started watching a movie on TV tonight. In the movie a guy meets a girl, and five minutes later the two of them are talking about sleeping together. Well, that was enough for me. I turned off the TV and ran two miles. It started to rain while I was out there. I got wet, but I didn't care because it was so nice out. There was nobody else outside except me. I guess they were all inside watching TV.

This guy isn't real, she thought. I've never met a guy who turns off the TV in that kind of scene.

The bell rang and everyone got up to leave. Kim knew she should give the notebook to Mr. Hadley, but she wanted to read some more. She took it with her and stuffed it in her book bag just as Derek showed up to take her home.

He was excited. "Guess what. I just got a long-distance call in the football office. You'll never guess who it was. Go ahead, guess."

"I don't know."

"The offensive coordinator from Tennessee. Can you believe it? He wants me to fly out there and visit the campus. He says they think I'd fit in real good with their program. They want me."

"That's great, Derek. Way to go." She hugged him.

"You know what this means? It means I'm going to be a superstar. We have to celebrate."

"I'm really happy for you, Derek. But I'm just not in the mood for celebrating," she said.

"Why not? What's the problem?"

"Nothing. I just don't feel like it today, that's all."

"There must be a reason."

"I just don't want to. All we'll end up doing is making out. Can't we go out on a real date?"

"Date? Okay, I'll get us a couple of six-packs and some nachos."

"No, Derek. Not today. I have to study tonight anyway."

"Maybe you'll change your mind."

They started outside to Derek's car. "Derek, you know most of the guys who go out for sports. Have you ever known any basketball players on the team who believe in chastity?"

Derek was puzzled. "Chastity? What's that?"

"It's waiting until you're married," she said.

"That's a joke, right?"

"No, I'm serious."

"Come on, Kim. There's nobody like that around here."

"That's what I thought too, but now I think maybe there's at least one."

"Well, even if there is, so what? He's nobody you'd be interested in."

"Why do you say that?" Kim asked.

"Admit it, Kim. One of the reasons you like going with me is because when we walk into a dance after a game, everybody turns and looks at us. Everyone in school wishes they were like us. We're the ones who make things happen. Let's face it. You like the attention as much as I do."

She decided to bring the journal notebook home with her. As they walked to his car, Derek draped an arm around her shoulder. As soon as they got in his car, he leaned over and kissed her. "Are you sure you don't want to go with me now?" he asked softly.

"I'm sure."

After dinner Kim went to her room and read more from the notebook.

October 7

Went to general priesthood meeting with Dad. Afterward he took me out for pizza. We had a good time. I can't believe it, but he played video games with me while we waited for our pizza. He's pretty bad at it, but at least he tried.

October 22

Took Tamra to homecoming. We had a good time, but I wish she didn't live so far away. If there were just one more member of the Church at school, someone I could talk with sometime, like at lunch.

Kim wanted to know more about the boy who'd written this. She remembered a girl who had a class in the same room

just before her class. She phoned. "Does anybody sit in the fourth desk in the row next to the door in social studies?"

"How should I know?"

"Just think about it, okay?"

"Fourth desk, huh? Let me think.

Karen Wilson sits in that seat. Why do you want to know?"

"No reason. I'm looking for a guy who sits in that desk. It must be in one of the earlier classes."

"How can you think about anyone else when you have Derek?" the voice on the phone questioned.

Kim started to watch TV. After about 10 minutes, a man and a woman ended up in bed together. He wouldn't watch this, she thought to herself. She turned the TV off and went to her bedroom, where she read some more.

November 6

Sometimes being the only member of the Church in school is really hard. All the friends I had in junior high are all drinking now. It seems like I'm the only one left who isn't.

November 9

Went to see the bishop for a birthday interview. I told him how hard it is to be the only Church member in school and how alone I feel sometimes and how much I wish there was a girl here who believed the same as I do. He suggested I write letters to the girl I'm going to marry and give them to her after I'm married. So maybe I'll do that. Here goes.

To the girl I'm going to marry someday:

I don't even know your name or where you live or anything about you, but I know you're growing up some place the same as me. Do you ever get discouraged? I do. I have friends at school but nobody I can really talk to about what I'm thinking because none of them believe the same way. I just want you to know I'm trying to live the way I should. I'm doing okay so far, but it's not easy sometimes. All my friends are drinking now, so there's not much I can do with them anymore on the weekends. I run along a bike path when I need to think. I really wish we could



spend some time together now.

I'll be glad when I finally get to meet you. I want to live so I never do anything that I'd be ashamed to tell you about.

There are a lot of things I need to do now to prepare for the future. Right now the biggest thing is to save up for my mission. And after that I need to try to figure out what I want to do for a living.

I've been thinking about you lately and about when we get married. Sometimes it's hard not to think about the things that go with marriage. But I guess I can stand holding off until you're my wife. My bishop says it's worth waiting, to make it the way God wants it to be.

Guess what. I love you even if I don't know your name or where you live.

*Love, your future husband,
Mike*

She read through the entire journal. The last entry had been written just a week before.

Kim knew a girl who had a class in the room where she found the journal. Maybe she knew who sat in that desk. Instead, all she got was, "How can you think about anyone else when you have Derek?"

The better she got to know this mystery man through his journal, the less satisfied she was with the way Derek treated her. Finally, she confronted him: "Is that all I am to you, Derek? Just somebody who'll go along with whatever you have in mind to do?"

February 17

The missionaries came and asked us to try to find somebody they can teach. We all said we'd try. I wish I could find someone at school who wants to know about the Church, but about the only time anybody mentions Mormons is when classes study about the pioneers. Our family set a date to introduce somebody to the gospel. It's two weeks from now. We don't know who it's going to be, but we're praying as a family that one of us will be able to find someone.

Kim set the notebook down. Now she felt a little guilty for invading someone's privacy. But she also felt she'd never known anyone as well as she knew this person. She would have liked to read it every night, but she promised herself that she'd turn it in to lost and found.

What do I know about him so far? she thought as she stood at the window looking at the street. His first name is Mike. He took a girl named Tamra to homecoming. He has a birthday in November. He never went out for basketball. Instead he works at Sooper Dooper.

She went through her high school yearbook from last year and wrote down a list of everyone with the first name of Mike or Michael.

The phone rang. It was Derek.

"Michigan wants me too!"

"That's great, Derek. I'm really glad for you."

"I just got off the phone with one of the coaches. He's flying out to see me next week. Tennessee would be okay, but playing for Michigan is what I've always dreamed of since I was a little kid. Can you imagine playing in front of 106,000 people? You could go to college there too. We have to celebrate now, Kim. I'll be over in a minute to pick you up."

Kim knew what that meant. "Derek, you could come over and be here with my family, but I don't want to go out."

"Look, there are plenty of girls who'd jump at a chance to go out with me."

"I know that."

"So what's your problem all of a sudden?"

"I know you're a super athlete and everything, but I don't know, maybe that isn't enough."

"Not enough? What are you talking

about? What else is there to life if it's not this? You, me, football."

"I'm not sure, but I'll be sure to tell you if I ever find out."

"Look, I don't know what's gotten into you, but some girl is going to party with me tonight. If it's not you, then it'll just have to be somebody else."

"I don't always have to do what you want me to do."

"What's going on here anyway? This is the biggest day of my life, and you're trashing it."

"Sorry, but I just don't feel like going out with you tonight," she said.

"Well, I guess that's it then. I'll find somebody else. No problem."

"Is that all I am to you, Derek? Just somebody who'll go along with whatever you have in mind to do?"

He swore at her and then hung up.

The next morning Kim decided to find out who'd written in the notebook.

Before school started she lingered across the hall from the classroom where she'd found the notebook. A girl sat in the desk she was interested in.

During second period she got permission to leave her class for a few minutes. She walked by the room again. There was a boy sitting at the desk where she'd found the notebook. Somehow she knew he was the one she was looking for. At first she was disappointed. She couldn't remember seeing him around. He'd never been at any of the parties she'd gone to. He wasn't in student council with her. She didn't even remember him from any of the dances or parties she'd attended. He wasn't a star athlete like Derek.

"He's just average," she whispered to herself.

The class was taking a test so everyone's eyes were on their papers. She stood there in the hall and stared at him. Kim couldn't decide what to think. He'll never be like Derek, she thought. If I went with him to a dance, none of the girls would tell me how lucky I am. Derek will probably play pro football. Someday he'll be rich and famous. People will always look up to Derek.

But this guy is just another boy. He isn't as tall or as well built as Derek. It's not too late for me to get Derek back. I'd be crazy to break up with him for

someone like this. Besides, this guy probably wouldn't even want to go with me because I'm not a Mormon. At most, we'd just end up being friends, she reasoned. I'm not sure I could even live the way he does. He's sort of cute, I guess, but on a scale of one to ten, Derek's a nine-and-a-half and this guy's a—I don't know—a six. But at least if we were spending time together, we might go on a real date occasionally instead of always doing what Derek wants.

Her thoughts trailed off because she noticed him look up. He must have been aware that someone was staring at him because he glanced through the door at her.

Kim smiled and pointed to the notebook. "Is this yours?" she mouthed the words.

He smiled and nodded his head.

"I'll wait for you," she mouthed again.

He turned in his exam early and came out to see her. The halls were still empty, and they were alone.

"I found this," she said. "I would have turned it into lost and found, but I saw it was like a diary and I didn't want people reading it."

"Thanks."

"No problem." She gave him the notebook. "Oh, my name is Kim."

"I'm Mike Simon. Well, thanks for getting this back to me."

She knew that if he walked away she'd probably never talk to him again. She didn't want that to happen because at least once in her life she wanted to know what it was like to have a friend who didn't demand a price for his friendship. She'd never had that before. She knew she was giving up Derek and all he could offer her, but more than anything she wanted to have a real friend.

Just then the bell rang, and the door flew open. People crowded on either side of them as they stood in the hall.

"Well, thanks again," he said. He turned to walk away.

I can't let him get away, she thought. "Wait," Kim called out.

"What?"

"I'd like to talk to you sometime, but not now because I'm really busy this week."

"I understand. You go with Derek Reeves, don't you?"

"I did. We just broke up. Well, I have



to run now too. The reason I'm so busy is because I'm doing a report in social studies about Mormons and I'm having a really hard time finding anything. Well, see you around sometime."

She walked three steps before he realized what she'd said.

"Wait a minute," he said.

She turned around.

"I could help you. I'm a Mormon."

"No kidding? That would be great if you could help me."

They leaned against the lockers in the hall and set up a time for her to go to his house and meet the missionaries so they could teach her about the Church.

In her next class she promised herself that sometime she would tell him the truth about what had happened with the journal. But not now. Right now she just wanted to see what it was like to have a friend like him.

Maybe he's the real superstar in this school, she thought, smiling. Maybe he's a superstar in the things that really matter. **NE**

Sometime she would tell him the truth about what had happened with the journal. But not now. Right now, she just wanted to see what it was like to have a friend like him.



IS YOUR TALK CHEAP?

We are judged by our speech. What do your words tell others about you and your standards?

In my freshman English class, the professor insisted that, to describe a situation, one of the students must substitute a crude expression for one gentler. I was jarred at an expression which I had seldom heard and never in harmonious circumstances. Years later in graduate school I had a conversation with a friend who argued that one should be, as he called it, direct, even if rude and insensitive to others' feelings

Unfortunately, the spirit animating these incidents has taken firm hold on



What we say and how we present ourselves not only betray our inner person but also mold that person, those around us, and finally our whole society.

society and is found even among the Saints. Over the years, there has been an increase in sexual innuendos, raucous humor, violent expressions, and great noise in talk, in music, in gestures. Much around us is crude and rude, with a corruption of moral behavior and sensitivity. Society has not been improved by our "light speeches" and our "light-mindedness" (D&C 88:121). Instead, our expressions have polluted our communities and corrupted our souls.

"That which cometh out"

In contrasting the importance of some of the weightier things of the kingdom with the dietary code of ancient Israel, Jesus told His disciples: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

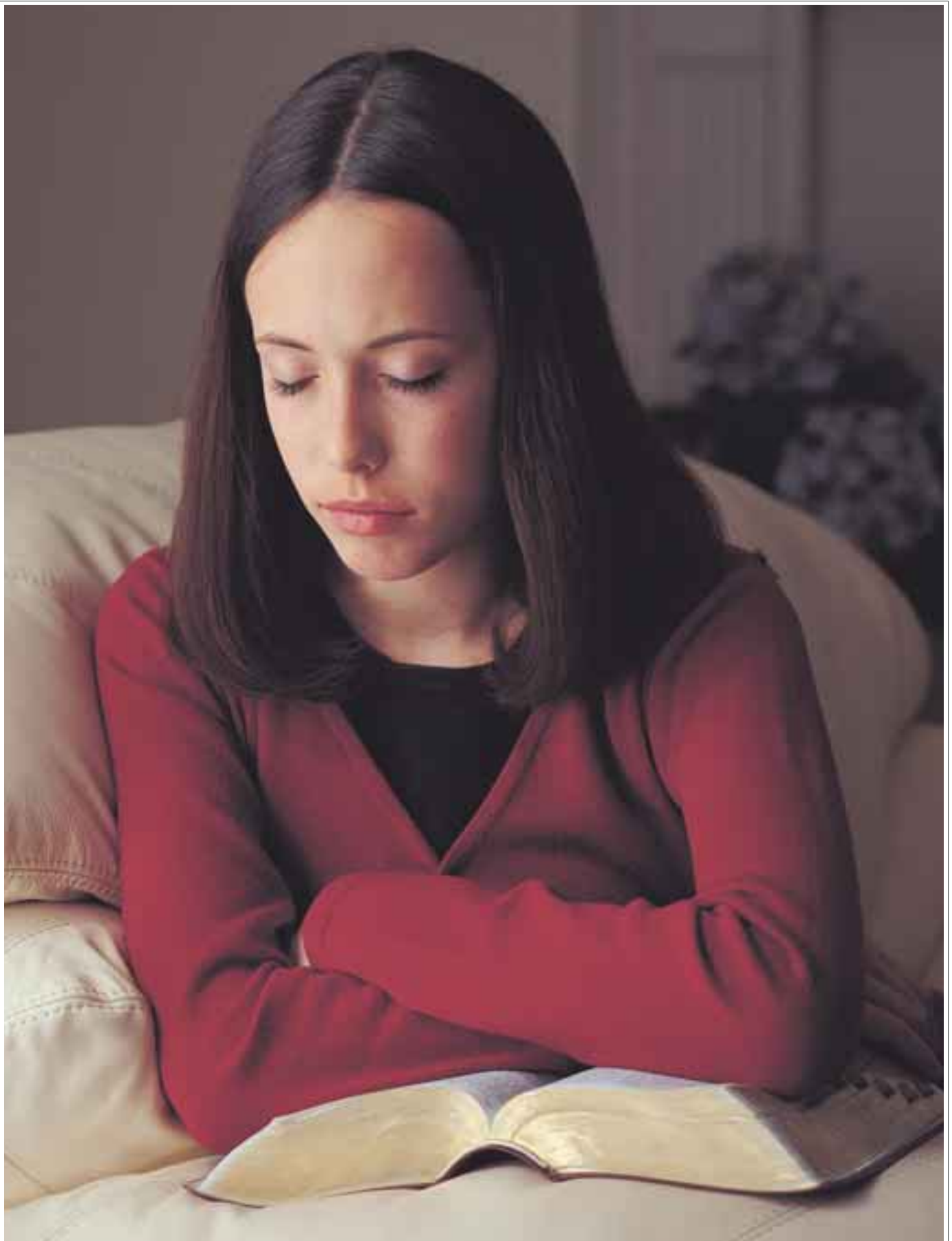
"... Those things which proceed out of the mouth come . . . from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matt. 15:11, 18). Our words and external expressions are not neutral, for they reflect both who we are and shape who we are becoming.

At Winter Quarters, as the Saints were in the midst of an arduous exodus, the Lord commanded, "Let your words tend to edifying one another" (D&C 136:24). Nephi declared that the fruit of receiving the Holy Ghost and listening to the promptings of the Spirit is that we may speak with "the tongue of angels" (2 Ne. 32:2). Thus we create a spirit of reverence and of revelation.

I recently overheard a conversation among some of our young grandchildren. One of them apparently used the word *stupid*. Eight-year-old Nicholas, recently



by Elder Robert S. Wood
of the Seventy





baptized, commented that perhaps one should not say that, as it was a “bad word.” It was evident that there had been some good influence from Mom and Dad. I know there had been similar discussions about other expressions. Now some might think that these are small matters compared to the far more foul and demeaning expressions all around us. Yet, in small and in great ways, our words create an atmosphere in which we build or demolish.

The little things

I recently commented to a friend from New York City that I thought the atmosphere had improved markedly in the city over the past years and wondered why. He noted that his wife is a municipal judge, and they were enforcing the little things, like ordinances against spitting and jaywalking, and the big things were being affected thereby. So in our daily speech and acts of edification, the Lord said, we invite the spirit of truth and righteousness in which we “may chase darkness from among [us]” (D&C 50:25).

President Spencer W. Kimball warned of vulgarity of speech and expression and particularly counseled against speaking of sex glibly, which he associated with immodesty. “Lewd talk and jokes,” he said, “constitute another danger which lurks seeking as its prey any who will entertain it as the first step to dirtying the mind and thus the soul” (*The*



When we speak and act, we should ask whether our words and expressions are calculated to invite the powers of heaven into our lives and to invite all to come unto Christ.

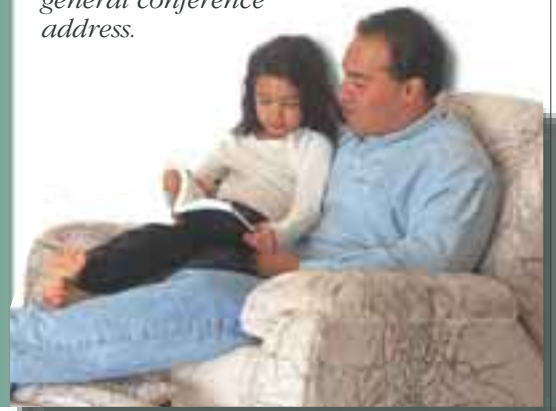
Miracle of Forgiveness, 228).

What we say and how we present ourselves not only betray our inner person but also mold that person, those around us, and finally our whole society. Every day each of us is implicated in obscuring the light or in chasing away the darkness. We have been called to invite the light and to be a light, to sanctify ourselves and edify others.

When we speak and act, we should ask whether our words and expressions are calculated to invite the powers of heaven into our lives and to invite all to come unto Christ. We must treat sacred things with reverence. We need to eliminate from our conversations the immodest and the lewd, the violent and the threatening, the demeaning and the false. As the Apostle Peter wrote, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Pet. 1:15). The expression *conversation* refers here not only to speech but also to our entire comportment. As Nephi, he is inviting us to so live that we may speak with the “tongue of angels.”

I bear witness that God is indeed holy. He is our Father, we His children. We are His heirs and co-heirs with Jesus Christ of His glory, and He has invited us to be as He is and to edify in word and in deed. I pray we may do so. **NE**

Adapted from an October 1999 general conference address.



Creative ideas for using this issue of the New Era.

Personal Improvement

□ Read Elder Jensen’s message “Making a Mighty Change” on page 4. Can you recite the 13th article of faith from memory? If not, memorize it and then recite it to yourself, replacing *we* with *I*, as Elder Jensen suggests.

□ Honestly evaluate your own video or CD collection. Are there any selections that are unwholesome or less than desirable? Put trash where it belongs—you’ll feel better if you do.

Family Home Evening Ideas

□ For one week, log your family’s television, Internet, and stereo use. Keep a pencil and paper handy where family members can write down what they watch, where they surf, and what they listen to. At family home evening, talk about the statistics on pages 10–15. Talk about changes you think might make your family happier or more spiritual.

Young Men and Young Women Activity Ideas

□ Read about the youth in Slidell, Louisiana, on page 26, and how they tackled the challenge of dressing modestly. Brainstorm ideas for a modesty activity—a fashion show is, of course, one option. Or go on a fantasy shopping trip. Give each person a “budget” and have them choose modest clothing they would buy if the shopping trip were real.

□ The youth in Alaska had a chance to commit to their standards at the dedication of their temple (see page 20). Special events coming up, like stake conference, youth standards night, or youth conference would be great times to have a special youth activity to commit individually and privately to the standards. A special speaker, perhaps your stake president or other youth leader, would make the occasion special. If your budget will allow it, order the inexpensive CTR rings from the distribution center for each participant to mark the occasion.

Laurel Value or Eagle Project

□ The Word of Wisdom is very important, not only because you’re living a commandment, but also because you’re protecting your physical health. Spread the word about the dangers of smoking through an education campaign. Contact your local health department or community center for ideas on providing a public service.

Member Missionary Work

□ This month’s *New Era* is full of great suggestions for keeping your standards. It might also be a useful tool for explaining your standards to your friends. Loan your copy to a friend of another faith or photocopy a few articles for them. Give them a copy of the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet too.

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“Every article strengthens my testimony in different ways.”



A help and encouragement

I remember when I was almost 12 and I was looking forward to going into the Young Women program and getting the *New Era*. I was so excited when I got my first issue in April 1995. I read it through in one day. The articles were awesome. I still enjoy the stories now that I'm 18. You will never realize how the *New Era* has helped comfort my soul, encouraged me to stay strong, and given me courage to do what is right. Most importantly, my testimony has grown as I have read the articles and felt the Spirit. The *New Era* is an excellent companion to the scriptures. I especially love the Message. The Message focuses me on a gospel principle I should be living. Also, it is so neat to read about LDS youth around the world serving and staying close to the gospel. I have often taken the *New Era* to school. My friends see me, and I jump at the chance to show them this magazine. They are impressed by the stories of youth around the world. The *New Era* does help to introduce the gospel. Thank you so much for publishing a wholesome magazine.

*Karen Burningham
Modesto, California (via e-mail)*

Strengthens

I'd just like to say I love to open the *New Era* when it comes every month. I don't get a chance to read every article, but I always like flipping through it. Every article strengthens my testimony in different ways. I also love reading about youth in different countries and their stories. Thank you for such a fine magazine.

*Marco Lo-Bianco
Bedford, England (via e-mail)*

The only one

I would like to thank you for publishing the article “Winning My War” (Nov. 2000). I have been feeling like everything has been going wrong with school, church, friends, and family. I felt like I no longer went to church to satisfy myself, but rather my parents. But after reading that article, I realized I am the only one who can win my war, and I must do

everything I can to achieve that. I have now started to read the Book of Mormon every day. Although no substantial changes have happened, I know they will. It just takes time, prayer, and faith. Thank you deeply for turning my life down the right path, a path in which I hope to find the answers I seek.

*Name Witbheld
Australia (via e-mail)*

A help in the process

My collection of the Mormonads I got from the different issues of the *New Era* makes up my bedroom “wallpaper.” I'd also like to thank you for the June 2000 special issue. I was so thrilled when I got it because it was very timely. I was preparing my papers for my mission at that time, and so were a number of my friends in my ward and in the institute. We did our part, working with the missionaries and attending missionary preparation class. But I was lacking a little confidence in filling out the papers. The last missionary in my family was released in 1988 while the last missionary our ward (or branch then) ever sent to the field left in 1994. Nobody close to me had fresh enough knowledge about applying for a mission to help me prepare. That issue not only helped me fill out my application, but the articles were very inspiring. They made me more excited to go. Since not many people here subscribe to the *New Era*, I was happy to share my copy with my friends who were also preparing to go. Five weeks after I sent in my application, I got my call to serve in the Philippines Ilagan Mission. Thanks a lot!

*Sister Maria Corazon Peroy
Philippines Ilagan Mission (via e-mail)*

*We love hearing from you. Write us at
We've Got Mail
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150*

*Or e-mail us at
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org
Submissions may be edited for length
and clarity.*

PERFECTION

by Wendy J. Allen

White
the immaculate
pure
yet compared
whites may seem
only cream
or grey.

Prism-split, white light will rainbow
faultless bands.
Just so, a million different but
flawless qualities compose
perfection.

One upon one I build
until my prism-perfect life is filled.
I am as my Father willed,
unflawed
washed clean
light.



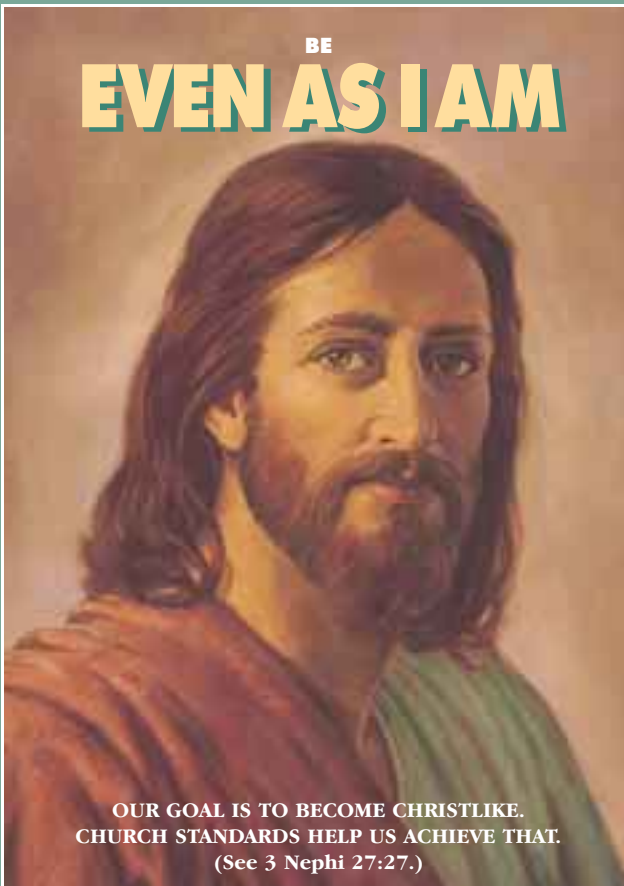
by Lane V. Erickson



*When we accept
gospel
standards as
our own, we
become more
concerned
about the
upward
direction of our
lives than about
testing the
limits of God's
laws.*

*See "Making a
Mighty Change,"
p. 4.*

**BE
EVEN AS I AM**



OUR GOAL IS TO BECOME CHRISTLIKE.
CHURCH STANDARDS HELP US ACHIEVE THAT.
(See 3 Nephi 27:27.)

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**BE YOUR
BEST**

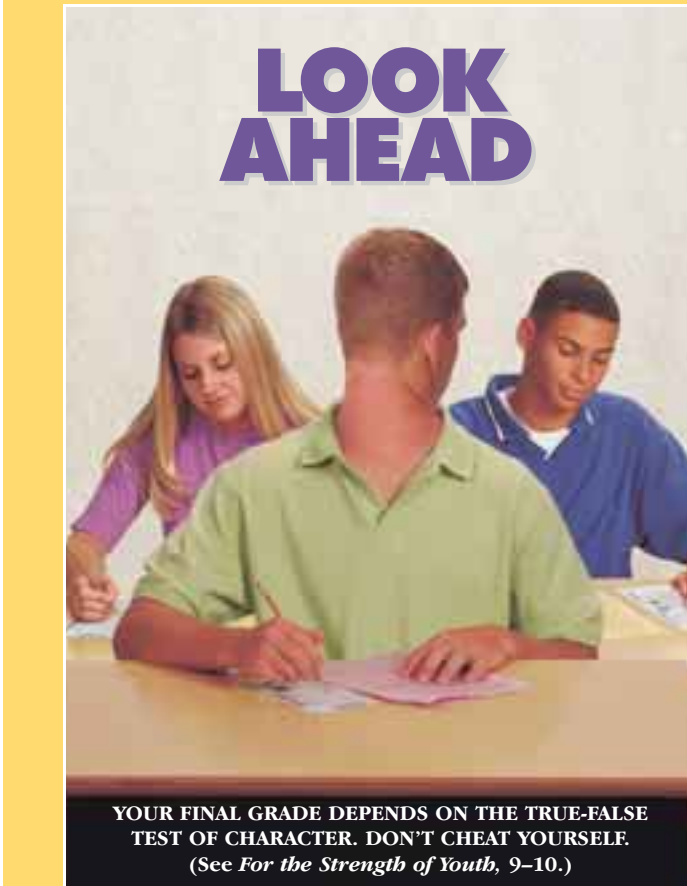


*BE GRATEFUL . BE TRUE
BE SMART . BE HUMBLE
BE CLEAN . BE PRAYERFUL*

PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

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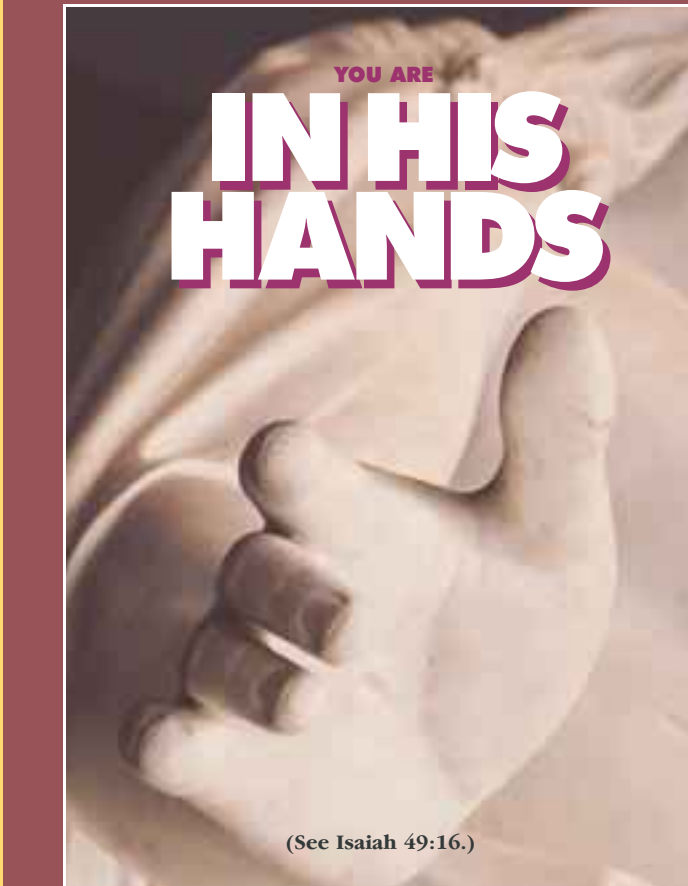
**LOOK
AHEAD**



YOUR FINAL GRADE DEPENDS ON THE TRUE-FALSE
TEST OF CHARACTER. DON'T CHEAT YOURSELF.
(See *For the Strength of Youth*, 9–10.)

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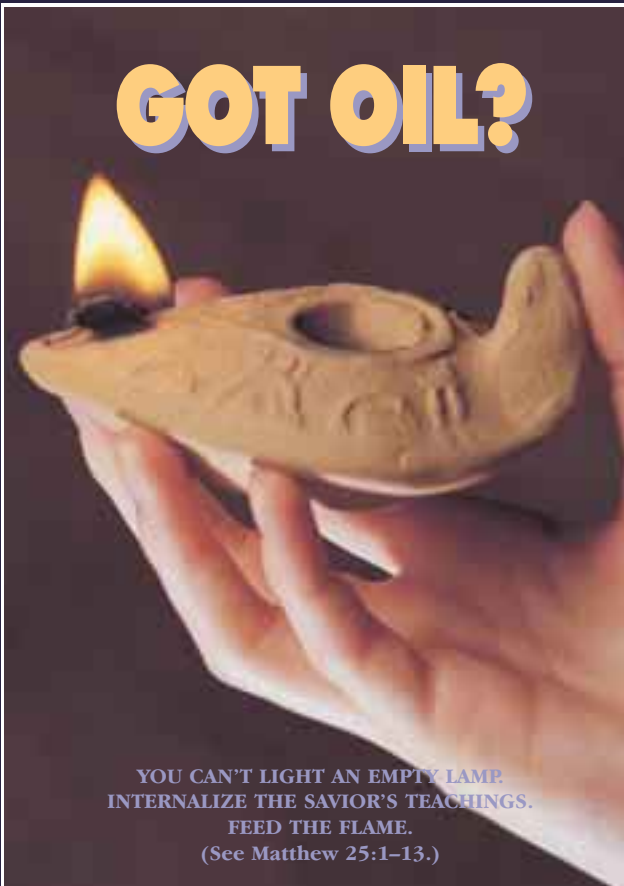
**YOU ARE
IN HIS
HANDS**



(See Isaiah 49:16.)

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GOT OIL?



YOU CAN'T LIGHT AN EMPTY LAMP.
INTERNALIZE THE SAVIOR'S TEACHINGS.
FEED THE FLAME.
(See Matthew 25:1–13.)

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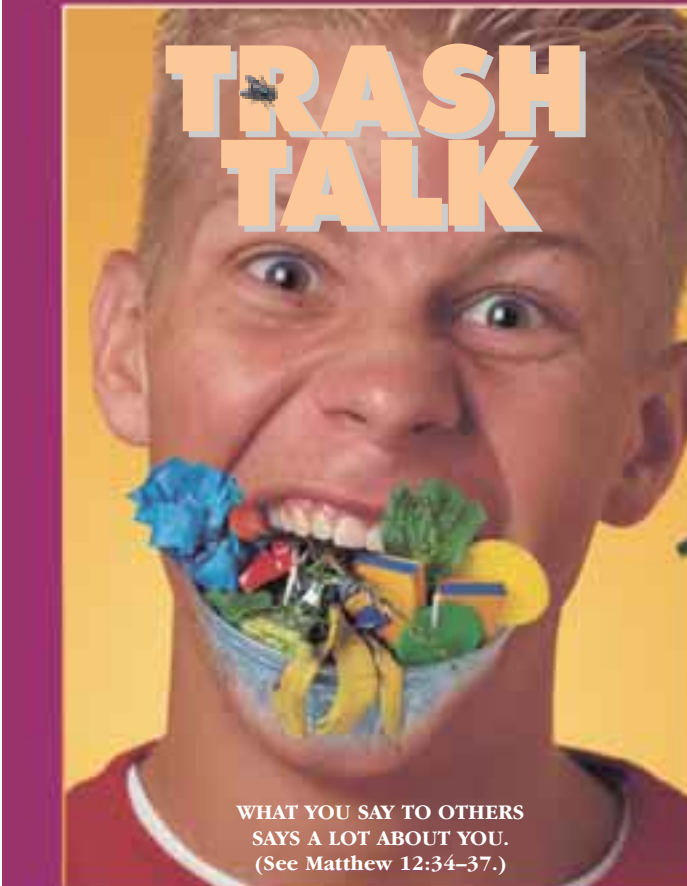
**SHELTER
FROM THE
STORM**



THERE'S COMFORT AND SAFETY IN THE STANDARDS,
AND THEY COVER EVERYONE.
(See Matthew 7:24–25.)

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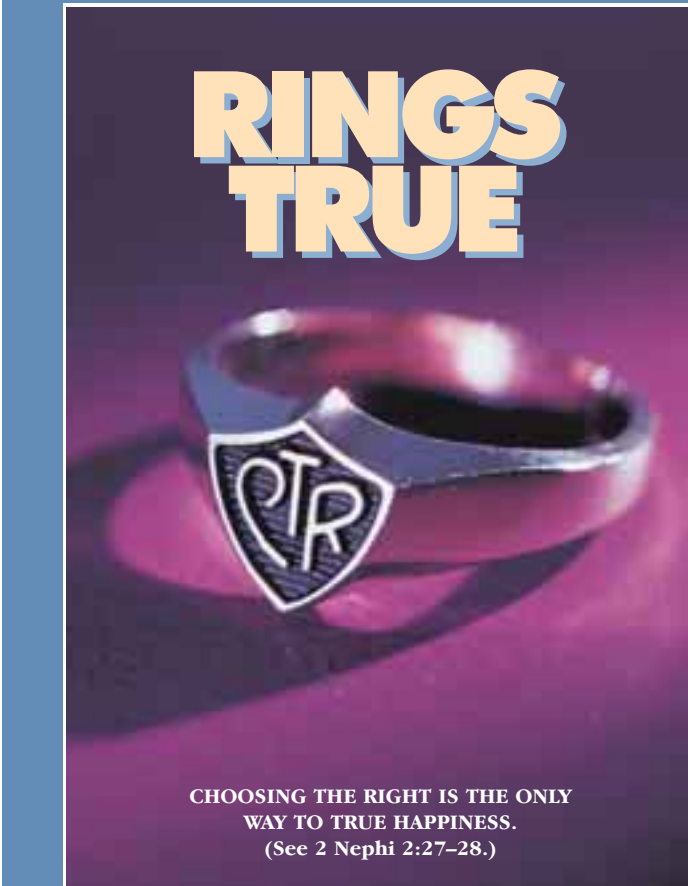
**TRASH
TALK**



WHAT YOU SAY TO OTHERS
SAYS A LOT ABOUT YOU.
(See Matthew 12:34–37.)

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**RINGS
TRUE**



CHOOSING THE RIGHT IS THE ONLY
WAY TO TRUE HAPPINESS.
(See 2 Nephi 2:27–28.)

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