

# STANDARDS of STRENGTH

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

*Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others.*



***The lighthouse of the Lord sends forth signals readily recognized and never failing. These words of warning, these safety standards, are printed in a small booklet entitled For the Strength of Youth.***

Young people, you live in tumultuous times. You have choices to make—choices with eternal consequences. But you are not left unaided in your decisions, however small or however large they may be.<sup>1</sup>

Permissiveness, immorality, pornography, and the power of peer pressure cause many to be tossed about on a sea of sin and crushed on the jagged reefs of lost opportunities, forfeited blessings, and shattered dreams.

Anxiously you ask, “Is there a way to safety? Can someone guide me? Is there an escape from threatened destruction? The answer is a resounding yes! I counsel you: Look to the lighthouse of the Lord. There is no fog so dense, no night so dark, no gale so strong, no mariner so lost but what its beacon light can rescue. It beckons through the storms of life. It calls, “This way to safety; this way to home.”

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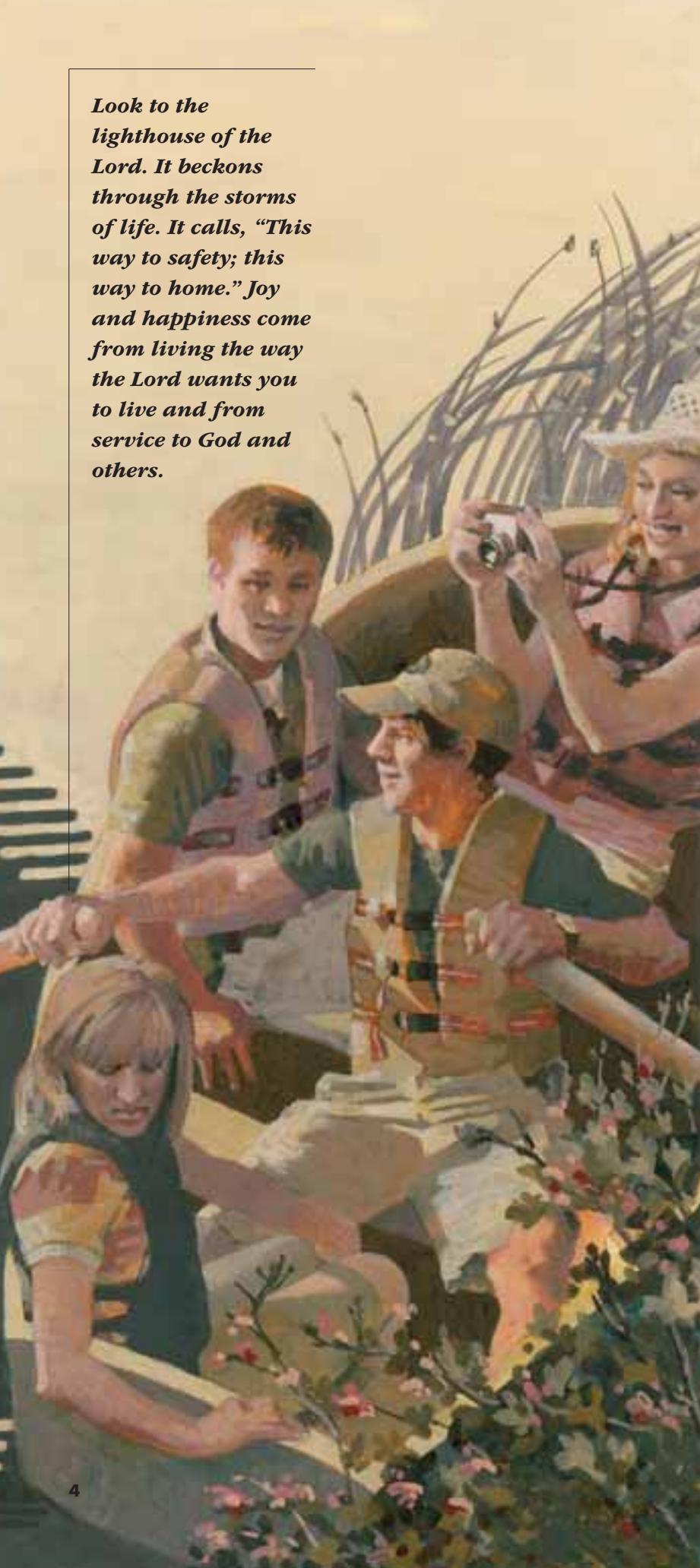
#### **Your Code of Conduct**

Precious young people, make every decision you contemplate pass this test: What does it do to me? What does it do for me? And let your code of conduct emphasize not “What will others think?” but rather “What will I think of myself?” Be influenced by that still, small voice. Remember that one with authority placed his hands on your head at the time of your confirmation and said, “Receive the Holy Ghost.” Open your hearts, even your very souls, to the sound of that special voice that testifies of truth. As the prophet Isaiah promised, “Thine ears shall hear a word . . . saying, This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21).

The tenor of our times is permissiveness. A most popular feature of one of the leading newspaper Sunday supplements portrays the idols of the movie screen, the heroes of the athletic field—those whom many young people long to emulate—as flouting the laws of God and rationalizing away sinful practices, seemingly with no ill effect. Don’t you believe it! There is a time of reckoning—even a balancing of the ledger. It’s called Judgment Day, even the Big Exam of Life.



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Are we prepared? Are we pleased with our own performances?<sup>3</sup>

#### **Honesty**

For some, there will come the temptation to dishonor a personal standard of honesty. In a business law class at the university I attended, I remember that one particular classmate never prepared for the class discussions. I thought to myself, "How is he going to pass the final examination?"

I discovered the answer when he came to the classroom for the final examination, on a winter's day, wearing on his bare feet only a pair of sandals. I was surprised and watched him as the class began. All of his books had been placed upon the floor. He slipped the sandals from his feet; and then, with toes that he had trained and had prepared with glycerine, he skillfully turned the pages of one of the books which he had placed on the floor, thereby viewing the answers to the examination questions.

He received one of the highest grades in that course on business law. But the day of reckoning came. Later, as he prepared to take his comprehensive examination, for the first time the dean of his particular discipline said, "This year I shall depart from tradition and shall conduct an oral, rather than a written, test." Our favorite, trained-toe expert found that he had his foot in his mouth on that occasion and failed the examination.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Entertainment and Media**

Our Heavenly Father has counseled us to seek after "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Articles of Faith 1:13.) Whatever you read, listen to, or watch makes an impression on you.<sup>5</sup>

Don't be afraid to walk out of a movie, turn off a television set, or change a radio station if what's being presented does not meet your Heavenly Father's standards. In short, if you have any question about whether a particular movie, book, or other form of entertainment is appropriate, don't see it, don't read it, don't participate.<sup>6</sup> Some publishers and printers prostitute their presses by printing millions of pieces of pornography each day. No expense is spared to produce a product certain to be viewed, then viewed again. One of the most accessible sources of pornography today is the Internet, where one can turn on a computer and instantly have at his fingertips countless sites featuring pornography. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "I fear this may be going on in some of your homes. It is vicious. It is lewd and filthy. It is enticing and habit-forming. It will take [you] down to destruction as surely as anything in this world. It is foul sleaze that makes its exploiters wealthy, its victims impoverished" ("Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51).<sup>7</sup>

### **Sexual Purity**

Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage, as well as full fidelity after marriage. In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you. Tears inevitably follow transgression. Men, take care not to make women weep, for God counts their tears.

President David O. McKay advised, "I implore you to think clean thoughts." He then made this significant declaration of truth: "Every action is preceded by a thought. If we want to control our actions, we must control our thinking." Brethren, fill your minds with good thoughts, and your actions will be proper. May each one of you be able to echo in truth the line from Tennyson spoken by Sir Galahad: "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure" (*Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed., ed. Angela Partington, 689).<sup>8</sup>

### **Mental and Physical Health**

The Apostle Paul declared, "Know ye not that ye are

the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). Nutritious meals, regular exercise, and appropriate sleep are necessary for a strong body, just as consistent scripture study and prayer strengthen the mind and spirit.

Hard drugs, wrongful use of prescription drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco products destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Any form of alcohol, including beer, is harmful to your spirit and your body. Tobacco can enslave you, weaken your lungs, and shorten your life.<sup>9</sup>

### **Repentance**

If any has stumbled in his journey, there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Our Savior died to provide you and me that blessed gift. Though the path is difficult, the promise is real: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Don't put your eternal life at risk. Keep the commandments of God. If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

These, then, are the standards found in *For the Strength of Youth*. Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others. . . .

You have a heritage: Honor it.

You will meet sin: Shun it.

You have the truth: Live it.

You have a testimony: Share it.<sup>10</sup>

### **NOTES**

1. From "Come Listen to a Prophet's Voice: The Lighthouse," *Friend*, Feb. 2006, 2.
2. From "The Lighthouse of the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 96.
3. From "Whom Shall I Marry?" *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 6.
4. From "That We May Touch Heaven," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 46.
5. From "The Lighthouse of the Lord," 97.
6. From "That We May Touch Heaven," 46.
7. From "True to the Faith," *Ensign*, May 2006, 18.
8. From "That We May Touch Heaven," 47.
9. From "That We May Touch Heaven," 46.
10. From "The Lighthouse of the Lord," 97.