

18 WAYS TO STAND STRONG

The First Presidency introduces the counsel in *For the Strength of Youth* with the following words: “Because the Lord loves you, He has given you commandments and the words of prophets to guide you on your journey.

Some of the most important guidelines for your life are found in this pamphlet” ([2001], 2).

The teachings on the next several pages will

help you apply the standards and principles found in the pamphlet. By holding fast to these standards, you will have greater happiness in your life and be a positive example to those around you.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DILLEEN MARSH,
EXCEPT AS NOTED



For the
Strength of Youth
Fulfilling Our Duty to God

AGENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Choose righteousness and happiness, no matter what your circumstances. Take responsibility for the choices you make. Develop your abilities and talents, and use them for good. Avoid idleness and be willing to work hard.

Above the Clouds

BY CHARLES W. DAHLQUIST II
Young Men General President

Not long ago I had the opportunity to fly in a small plane. As we were preparing to board, one of the passengers asked the pilot at what altitude we would be flying. He indicated that we would be flying at 9,500 feet (2,900 m). He said, "That will get us just above the clouds." Then he explained, "If we fly below the clouds, the ride will be fairly rocky. However, if we can get through the clouds and up on top, we will have a much smoother ride."

It was a concept that proved prophetic. For us in that airplane, it took a little bit more effort, a little bit more fuel, and a little turbulence to get through the clouds. However, once we were above the turbulence, the ride was, for the most part, smooth sailing.

Although there was some brief turbulence and the need for the pilot to always be mindful of the flight conditions, the flight was much more comfortable.

Later I thought about the pilot's words: "If we can get through the clouds and up on top, we will have a much smoother ride." I thought about how much that applies to life itself. As we live in a mortal existence, there is much of the ugly and the base and the evil that we have to move above if we are to live the life of a Latter-day Saint. Then we can have the Spirit with us and feel the peace that is there for us to enjoy. It takes effort, it takes willpower, it takes courage, and it takes making correct choices for us to get above the turbulence around us. That turbulence includes the filth that surrounds us in the media. It includes discouragement, despair, and all the challenges of the

"natural man" (Mosiah 3:19).

However, if we exercise our agency appropriately, if we live the standards given to us by the First Presidency in *For the Strength of Youth*, and if we make conscious efforts day by day to rise above the things of the world, our ride in this life will be much more pleasant. We will be able to feel peace along the way, and we will be able to arrive safely at our journey's end.

It is not that the ride will be uneventful and completely peaceful. That was never promised, for there will be challenges along the way, and there will be a need for continued vigilance and alertness all along the way. However, by choosing to be on the Lord's side, we can rise above the temptations of our mortal existence, and that will guarantee us peace and happiness in this life as well as in the life to come.



GRATITUDE

Have a spirit of gratitude in all you do and say. Thank God for your blessings, and express appreciation to others who help you.

This is a wonderful time to be living here on earth. Our opportunities are limitless. While there are some things wrong in the world today, there are

many things right, such as teachers who teach, ministers who minister, marriages that make it, parents who sacrifice, and friends who help.

“We can lift ourselves, and others as well, when we refuse to remain in the realm of negative thought and cultivate within our hearts an attitude

of gratitude. If ingratitude be numbered among the serious sins, then gratitude takes its place among the noblest of virtues. . . .



“ . . . Let us reflect gratitude for our *Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*. His glorious gospel provides answers to life’s greatest questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where does my spirit go when I die?”

President Thomas S. Monson, “An Attitude of Gratitude,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 54, 60.

EDUCATION

Prepare to be an influence for good in the world. Obtain an education, and be enthusiastic about learning. Attend seminary.

Plans for the Future

BY MÔNICA SANTOS DE OLIVEIRA

I returned from the mission field with many hopes regarding employment. Even though I had worked before, I had no qualifications, so I did what I could to find work, but I was never satisfied and could not see any progress in my future.

I always wanted to study, but I could not pay for schooling, and my family was not in a position to help me.

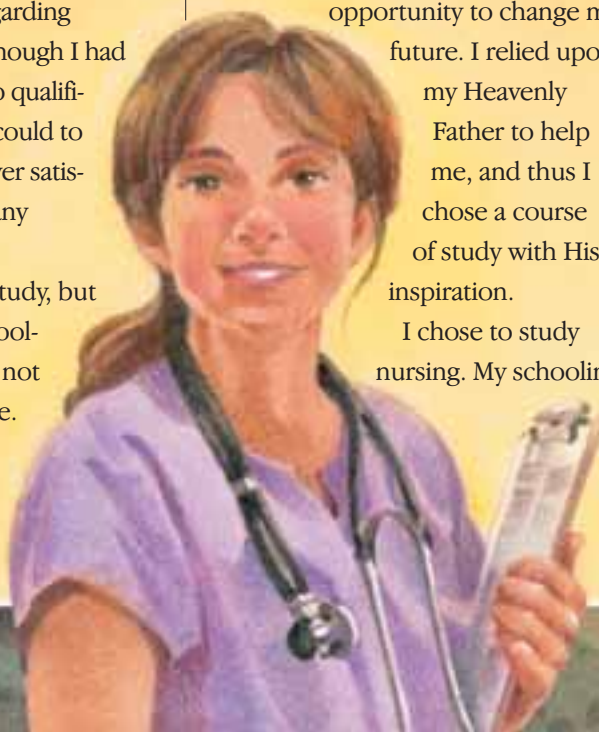
When the Perpetual

Education Fund was started, I saw an opportunity to change my future. I relied upon my Heavenly Father to help me, and thus I chose a course of study with His inspiration.

I chose to study nursing. My schooling

required a lot of study and dedication. But I became impassioned with nursing. Three months after graduating, I was able to find employment at one of the best hospitals in Alagoas, Brazil.

I have many plans for the future. I plan to take advanced studies in nursing, and I have started to pay back my loan so others can partake of the opportunity of receiving an education and the blessings that come with it.



FAMILY

Do your part to build a happy home. Honor your parents, and strengthen your relationships with your brothers and sisters.

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have declared: “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”¹

Interestingly, these simple truths, founded on our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness, are sometimes surprising to the world. But a recent study found that teens outside the Church are also finding happiness in spirituality and in their family relationships. In 2007 two large U.S. media organizations surveyed young people ages 12 to 24 to find what makes them happy.

The study presented these findings, among others:



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND

- Youth “depend on parents as a vital source of security and happiness.”
- “Youth will increasingly seek happiness via spirituality and faith.”
- “A resurgence of interest among youth in traditional family structures will gain momentum.”

One of the summary statements from the study said, “While our initial research did find that today’s youth are more traditional than previous generations, we were surprised to find the extent to which youth anticipate their own marriages and families with great joy.”²

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. See Associated Press/MTV Research and Strategic Insights, *Happiness*, Aug. 20, 2007.

FRIENDS

Choose friends who share your high standards. Treat everyone with kindness and respect. Invite friends of other faiths to Church activities. Reach out to new converts and those who are less active.

It Could Have Been Me

NAME WITHHELD

When I was seven, a girl moved into my neighborhood, and we became friends. We both liked the same things, and we were a good influence on each other. We made good choices because our parents had taught us to choose wisely.

Once we got into sixth grade though, we made wrong choices in order to fit in with our friends who had lower standards. The next year, I decided that I needed to change friends so I could start making right choices again by living higher standards. The only problem was that my friend and I were still friends, and I didn’t want to stop hanging out with her.



Doing what I needed to do was hard. I had been told all my life to pick good friends and keep my standards high. But I did not have a testimony of why this was important, so I had to trust that it was correct. Over the summer and during eighth grade, we stopped hanging out as much and chose separate directions.

I saw the blessings of this decision later that year. My former friends decided to bring alcohol to school. They convinced some other girls to drink it, and they all got in trouble. I realized that one of those girls could have been me. If I had been with them, I don't know if I would have had the strength to stand up for my beliefs.

When I think of the consequences I would have had to face, I feel overwhelmed. I could have struggled with addiction, been in trouble with the law, lost my parents' trust, but most of all, I could have betrayed the trust Heavenly Father has in me.

I know that what the prophet says about living high standards is for our protection. Even though we may see it as inconvenient, it helps us spiritually, physically, mentally, and in other ways we don't even realize.



DRESS AND APPEARANCE

Dress modestly to show respect for God and yourself. Never lower your dress standards for any occasion. Do not disfigure your body with tattoos and body piercings.

The Shopping Trip

BY REBECCA RICHTER

My mom and I were shopping when I found a black skirt I just had to have. I tried on the skirt and came out to show my mom. She hesitated before saying, "Becky, I think it's a little on the short side." I replied that I didn't think so and reassured her that all the girls at school were wearing similar styles—some a lot shorter. I tried for several minutes to persuade her to like the skirt.

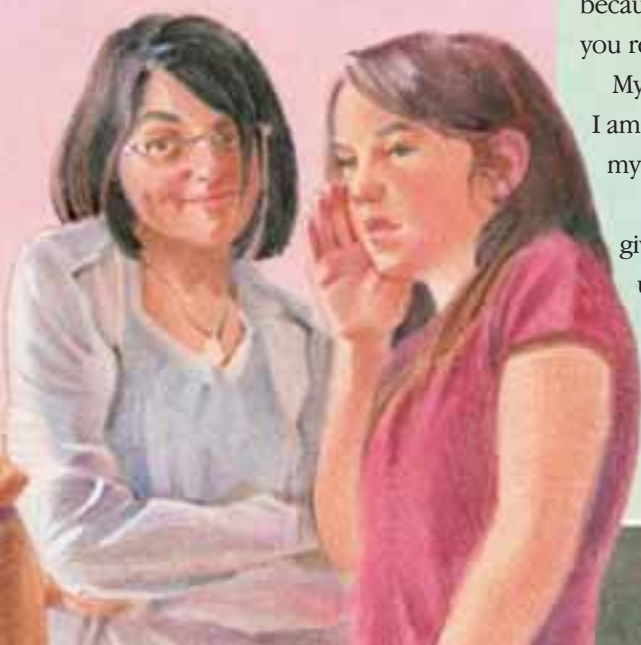
My mom finally said firmly, "It's too short. We're not getting it. Go change."

I didn't understand why she was being so strict with me, especially when I felt like I was old enough to decide for myself what I could wear. Our shopping trip was ruined, and we drove home in silence.

Finally, my mom spoke: "Becky, the reason I didn't let you get the skirt is because it didn't look like you. That skirt was too short and didn't reflect who you really are. You're a daughter of God."

My mom's explanation taught me a principle that I will always remember. I am a daughter of God, and everything I do and wear reflects what I think of myself and how I feel about my Heavenly Father and my Savior.

Dressing modestly is a constant struggle, but I'm grateful that I didn't give in and compromise my standards. I know that if we can come to truly understand that we are children of God, we will overcome our desires to dress like the world.





ENTERTAINMENT AND THE MEDIA

Choose uplifting entertainment. Avoid anything that is vulgar, immoral, violent, or pornographic in any way. Commit to keeping God's standards.

With so many types of entertainment all around us, the choices can be overwhelming. Here are some guidelines to help us choose uplifting entertainment:

1. Before playing a video game or seeing a movie, research its rating and content.
2. Ask yourself if there is unsuitable material in the game or movie, regardless of the rating. Avoid

anything that drives away the Spirit.

3. If the material is inappropriate, it's perfectly OK to walk out, turn it off, or put it down.
4. Look for edifying games, movies, and music that are also mentally stimulating.
5. Discover the world away from television, cell phones, and computers, such as hiking, biking, learning a new skill, or learning about other cultures.

6. Enjoy activities that keep your mind active and your body physically fit.

What are God's standards that can guide in choosing media? "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

MUSIC AND DANCING

Listen to music that helps you draw closer to Heavenly Father. Do not listen to music that encourages immorality, glorifies violence, or uses offensive language. When dancing, avoid full body contact or suggestive movements.

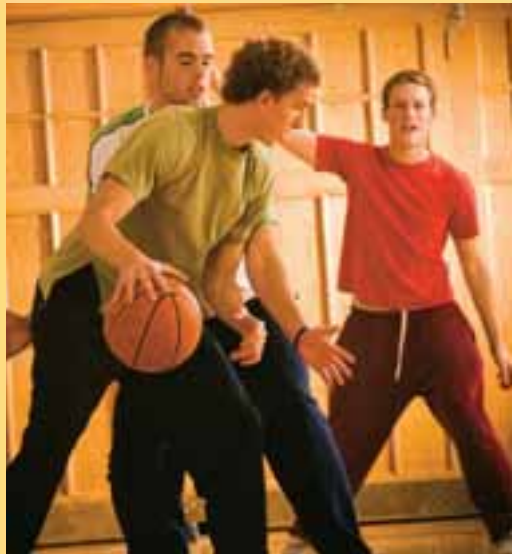
Young people, you cannot afford to fill your minds with the unworthy music of our day. It is not harmless. It can welcome onto the stage of your mind unworthy thoughts and set a tempo to which they dance and to which you may act. You degrade yourself when you identify with those things that at times surround extremes in

music—the shabbiness, the irreverence, the immorality, the addictions. Such music is not worthy of you.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Worthy Music, Worthy Thoughts," New Era, Apr. 2008, 9.

Visit www.lds.org/churchmusic to listen to hymns, download songs, or learn more about music.





LANGUAGE

Use language that uplifts, encourages, and compliments others. Use the names of God and Jesus Christ with reverence and respect.

Do not use profane, vulgar, or crude language or gestures.

Conversation is the substance of friendly social activity. It can be happy. It can be light. It can be earnest. It can be funny. But it must not be salty, or uncouth, or foul if one is in sincerity a believer in Christ. . . .

“[Anyone] who must resort to such language immediately says that he is poverty-ridden in his vocabulary. He does not enjoy sufficient richness of expression to be able to speak effectively without swearing or using foul words. . . .

“Don’t swear. Don’t profane. Avoid so-called dirty jokes. Stay away from conversation that is sprinkled with foul and filthy words. You will be happier if you do so, and your example will give strength to others.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Take Not the Name of God in Vain,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 48.

TOP LEFT: ILLUSTRATION BY CARY HENRIE; LEFT: ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT GREER; ABOVE: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW REIER; TOP RIGHT: ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN STOKER

DATING

Do not date until you are at least 16 years old. Date only those who have high standards. When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. Plan activities that

help you remain close to the Spirit of the Lord.

The best group dates are planned yet casual, inexpensive yet fun. Be creative; people enjoy something that offers variety and allows them to get to know others while having a good time. Ask your parents, friends, or youth leaders for ideas for group dates. Here are just a few to get you started:

- Take a tour of a local candy factory, cheese factory, or other local spot of interest.
- Organize a potluck dinner, and assign people to bring certain dishes or ingredients.
- Visit a local park, where you can feed the birds, take a walk, throw a Frisbee, ride bikes, or have a picnic.
- Visit a museum, aquarium, or zoo. Check the newspaper or Internet for free or discounted tickets.
- Have a service date. Rake a neighbor’s leaves, wash windows, or help with something that needs to be done.
- If you’re in the mood for a quieter evening, visit a local library or bookstore and browse through books together.
- If you live in a region with a lot of snow, build an elaborate snowman together. If you live near a beach, build a sandcastle. Or build separate ones, and have a competition judged by strangers who pass by.



“Let me guess. First date?”



SEXUAL PURITY

Keep yourself sexually pure. Do not have any sexual relations before marriage.

Do not participate in talk or activities that arouse sexual feelings. Do not participate in homosexual activities.

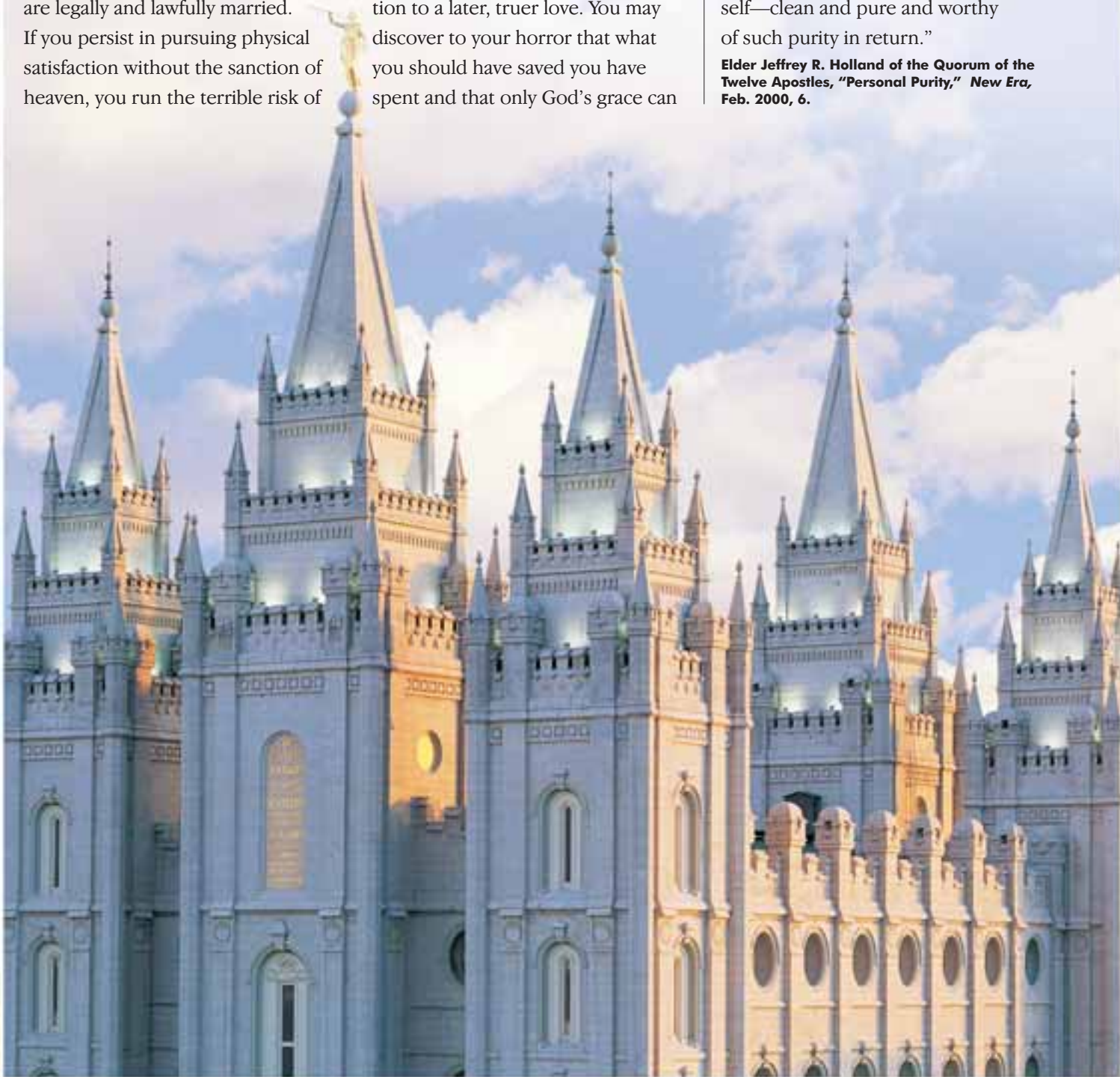
Seek help if you become a victim of rape, incest, or other sexual abuse.

In matters of human intimacy, *you must wait!* You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are legally and lawfully married. If you persist in pursuing physical satisfaction without the sanction of heaven, you run the terrible risk of

such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine *both* your longing for physical intimacy *and* your ability to give wholehearted devotion to a later, truer love. You may discover to your horror that what you should have saved you have spent and that only God's grace can

recover the virtue you so casually gave away. On your wedding day the very best gift you can give your eternal companion is your very best self—clean and pure and worthy of such purity in return.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Personal Purity,” *New Era*, Feb. 2000, 6.





REPENTANCE

Through the Savior's Atonement, you can receive forgiveness and be cleansed from your sins when you repent. Confess your sins to the Lord and to those you have wronged. If the sins are serious, you also need to confess them to your bishop.

Our sincere desire should be to have both clean hands *and* a pure heart—both a remission of sins from day to day *and* to walk guiltless before God. Clean hands alone will not be enough when we stand before Him who is pure and who, as ‘a lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1 Peter 1:19), freely spilled His precious blood for us.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Clean Hands and a Pure Heart,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 82.

HONESTY

Be honest with yourself, others, and the Lord. Do not rationalize that dishonesty is right.

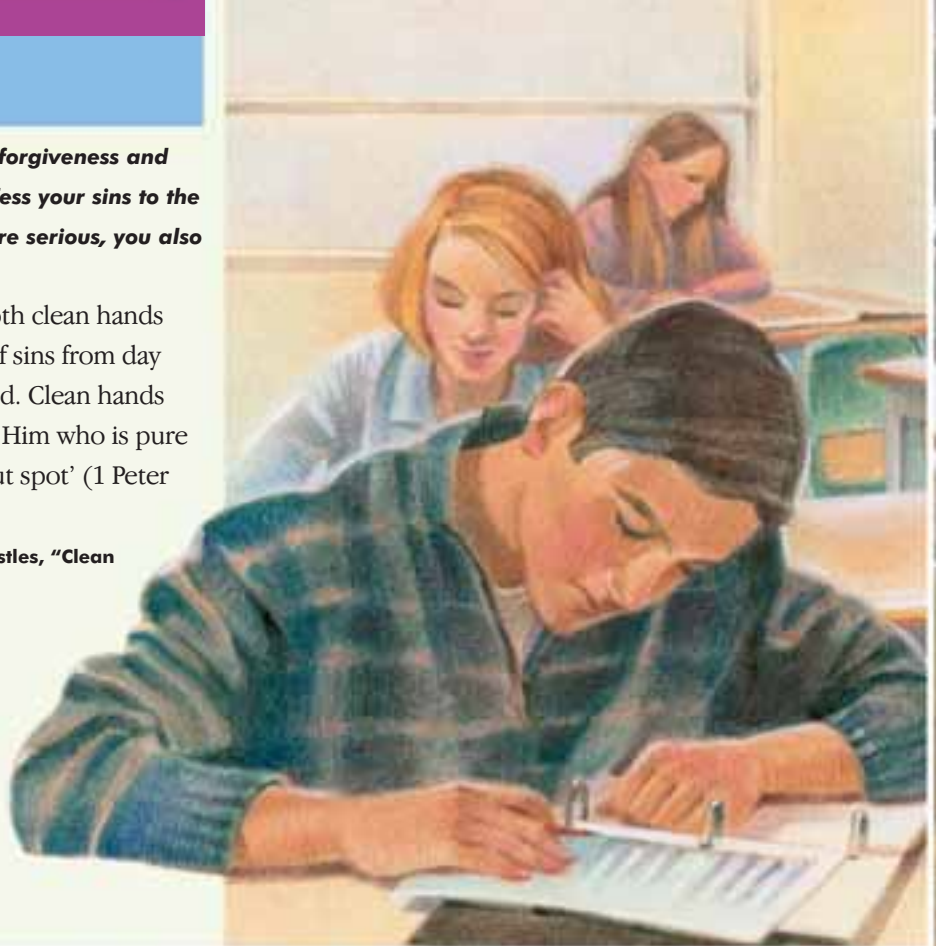
Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving. . . .

“Cheating in school is a form of self-deception. We go to school to learn. We cheat ourselves when we coast on the efforts and scholarship of someone else. . . .

“Stealing is all too common throughout the world. . . . Stealing takes many forms, including shoplifting; taking cars, stereos, CD players, video games, and other items that belong to someone else; stealing time, money, and merchandise from employers; . . . or borrowing without any intention of repayment. No one has ever gained anything of value by theft. . . .

“The stealing of anything is unworthy of a priesthood holder.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Honesty—a Moral Compass,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 41–42, 43.



SABBATH DAY OBSERVANCE

Use the Sabbath to worship the Lord, attend church, draw closer to your family, and help others. Do not seek entertainment or spend money on the Sabbath. When possible, avoid working on Sunday.

Where Should I Be?

BY EMMA WITHERS

Do you ever have those Sundays where you just don't feel like going to church? Well I have, especially recently. I've just moved into a new ward in Cape Town, South Africa. It's not that the people in the ward aren't nice or friendly. They just aren't my friends from home.

After my first week in the ward I had made up my mind—from now on I was only going to sacrament meeting. The following week I went late. As I walked through the chapel doors, I was greeted by few people and took my seat. As I sat there, I felt so homesick. All I wanted was my old ward, the friendly faces that knew me.

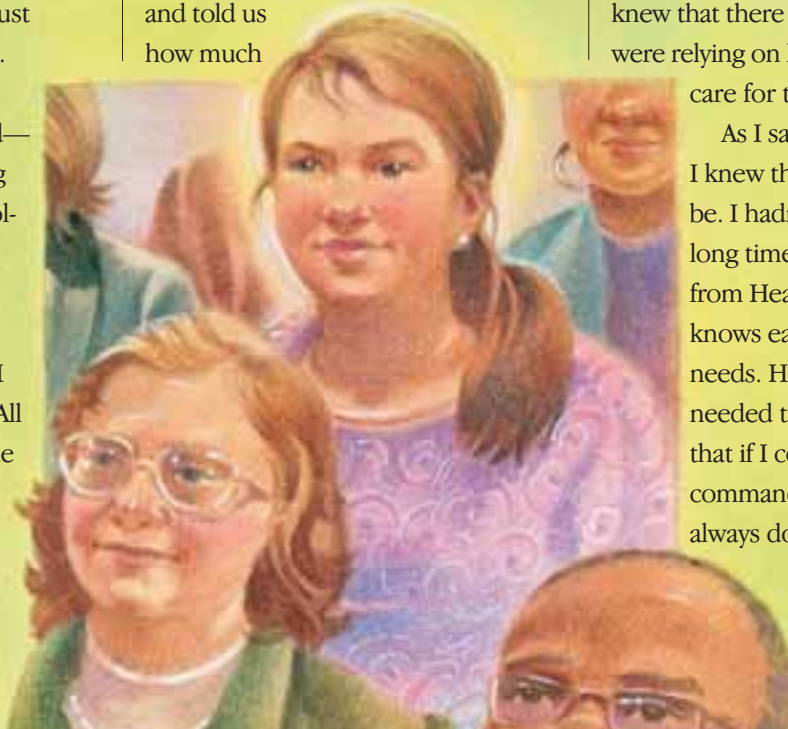
Then the first speaker got up and began her talk. It was

like she was speaking to me. She spoke of feeling alone in a new city, and I realized I was not the only one. Then the second speaker shared another message which held personal significance to me. Just before the meeting ended, the bishop stood up and told us how much

Committing to attend your Church meetings is a most significant decision in your efforts to keep the Sabbath day holy.

he loved each one of us. He said he knew that there were people who were relying on him to look after and care for them.

As I sang the closing hymn, I knew this was where I should be. I hadn't felt such peace in a long time, and I knew it came from Heavenly Father. He knows each of us and our needs. He gave me what I needed that day, and I know that if I continue to live His commandments, He will always do so.



A SIGN OF COMMITMENT TO THE LORD



Ezekiel 20:12, 19–20]. . . .

“When I was [young], I wondered just what activities were appropriate for the Sabbath. I read lists of do’s and don’ts, all compiled by others. But now I have a much better understanding, which I gained from two Old Testament scriptures [see Exodus 31:12–13;

“Pondering these scriptures has helped me to understand. My behavior on the Sabbath constitutes my sign to the Lord of my regard for him and for my covenants with him. . . . I have concluded that our activities on the Sabbath will be appropriate when we honestly consider them to be our personal sign of our commitment to the Lord.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Reflection and Resolution,” in Brigham Young University 1989–90 Speeches (1990), 6.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Willingly pay a full tithe. Attend tithing settlement. Obey the law of the fast.

I'd Rather Be Blessed!

BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

In Guyana, a country located in the northern part of South America, Latter-day Saint teens are talking about tithes and offerings.

"I'd rather be blessed!" says Simeon Lovell, 14, during a seminary lesson at the Prashad Nagar meetinghouse in Georgetown. The class has just read Malachi 3:8–12, which warns that those who rob God by not paying tithing will be cursed but promises that those who do pay tithing will have blessings so great they can't be measured.

"Look at all that is promised," says classmate Xiann Kippins, 16. "You will be protected. You will prosper. The windows of heaven will be opened to you."

Clint Callender, 17, of the



supplies provided by the Church—it makes me happy to think I can be part of that by being generous with my offerings."

Elsewhere in the West Indies Mission, 17-year-old Curfew Ali of the Arima Branch in Port of Spain, Trinidad,

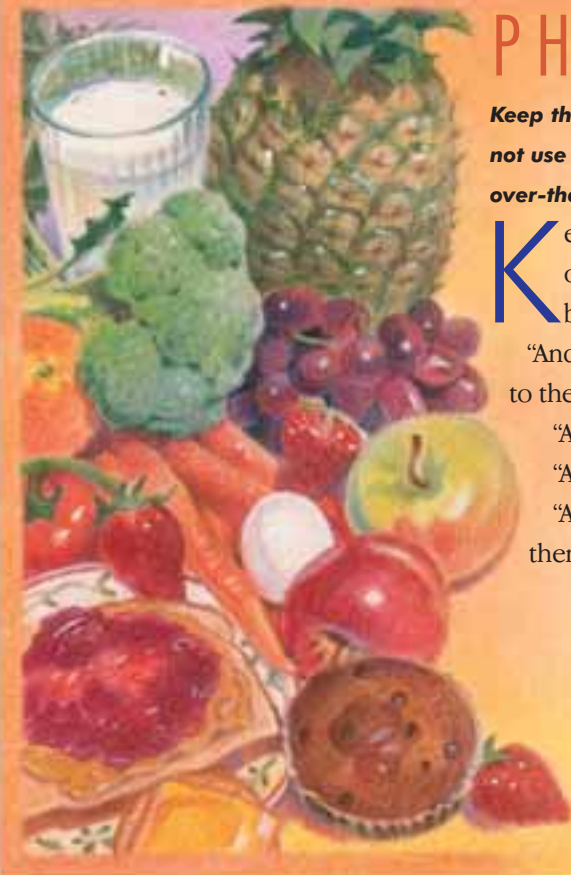
Garden Park Second Branch (also in Georgetown), says, "Everything on earth is from Heavenly Father. He asks for only a little portion of it back, to help us show our gratitude. So I am happy to pay tithing. I am happy to fast once a month and donate to provide for the poor.

And when I see all the Church does when there is a tsunami, hurricane, or other disaster—all the clothing and food

explains to Mark Mangray, also 17, that even though she earns only a little money, she pays 10 percent of her increase as tithing and contributes to fast offerings too. "That way, I know the Lord is free to bless me," she says. She talks to Mark about tithing settlement and how great it feels to be able to declare that she has paid a full tithing.

Mark looks at a blank donation slip, reads it, and says, "You're right, Curfew. I'm bringing my tithing to church tomorrow."





PHYSICAL HEALTH

Keep the Word of Wisdom. Eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. Do not use hard drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, or tobacco products. Do not abuse prescription or over-the-counter medications.

Keeping your body healthy will help you handle the stresses of life. When we obey the Word of Wisdom, Heavenly Father has promised us wonderful blessings:

“And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

“And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them” (D&C 89:18–21).

You know the don'ts of the Word of Wisdom, but do you know the do's? Read Doctrine and Covenants 89:10–17 to find out.

SERVICE TO OTHERS

Serve others in your Church assignments and in your home, school, and community. Seek daily the guidance of the Holy Ghost to know whom to serve and how to help meet their needs.

King Benjamin taught, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). There are many ways to serve others, but sincerity and love are the key. Here are some other tips and suggestions on how to serve:

1. Don't forget that service to your family comes first.
2. Make your service fit individual

needs. Think about what someone might like, want, or need.

3. Keep service activities simple, and include others in planning and carrying them out.

4. A smile, a cheerful attitude, a listening ear, sincere praise, and quiet acts of kindness are important forms of service.

5. Remember and apply the counsel given in Mosiah 4:21. Share generously with others.



GO FORWARD WITH FAITH

Be true to the Lord and to His Church. Regularly pray in private and read the scriptures. Keep your covenants and listen to the whisperings of the Spirit. The Lord will help you meet your trials and challenges.

The World Is Looking to You

BY THE YOUNG WOMEN GENERAL PRESIDENCY

Now is the time to go forward with faith. It is the time to be found keeping the commandments of God. It is the time to exercise your faith by being prayerful and obedient. As you exercise your faith by following these standards with exactness, you will find that you will be happy and have more opportunities to share the gospel and your beliefs with others. Living these standards will give you freedom, not restrict you.

As you go forward with faith, you will reap the promised blessings and the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon you. With His Spirit to guide you, you will know what to do and how to respond in every circumstance, and you will be keeping your baptismal covenant to always remember Him.

Youthful leaders in all ages have been asked to exercise their faith and to obey with exactness. Nephi, Joseph Smith, Ruth, and many others have acted with faith as they have been obedient to the Lord and His prophets.

You are the youth of the noble birthright, a royal generation, and a generation of destiny. Your faith will make all the difference in a world that is looking for goodness and light. The world is looking to you for example and leadership. Therefore, “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). **NE**



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