

# MAKING **RIGHTEOUS** CHOICES

*will help get you on the path of righteousness and make sure you don't wander.*



**By Elder Paul V. Johnson**  
Of the Seventy

A number of years ago, I attended my 20-year high school reunion. I hadn't seen many of my former classmates since graduation day, and I was excited for the opportunity to see them again. Some of these classmates surprised me; a few who were formerly well-behaved youth had since gotten into trouble or seemed to have otherwise changed for the worse. A few others who used to have lower standards were now active Church members, and I could see that the power of the Atonement had been at work in their lives.

However, I noted with interest that the majority of my former classmates were on the same path they had been following in high school. The decisions they had made so many years ago had largely determined where they were today. Many who had been good, righteous teenagers were now righteous adults. And many who had started down the wrong path so long ago were still on that course.

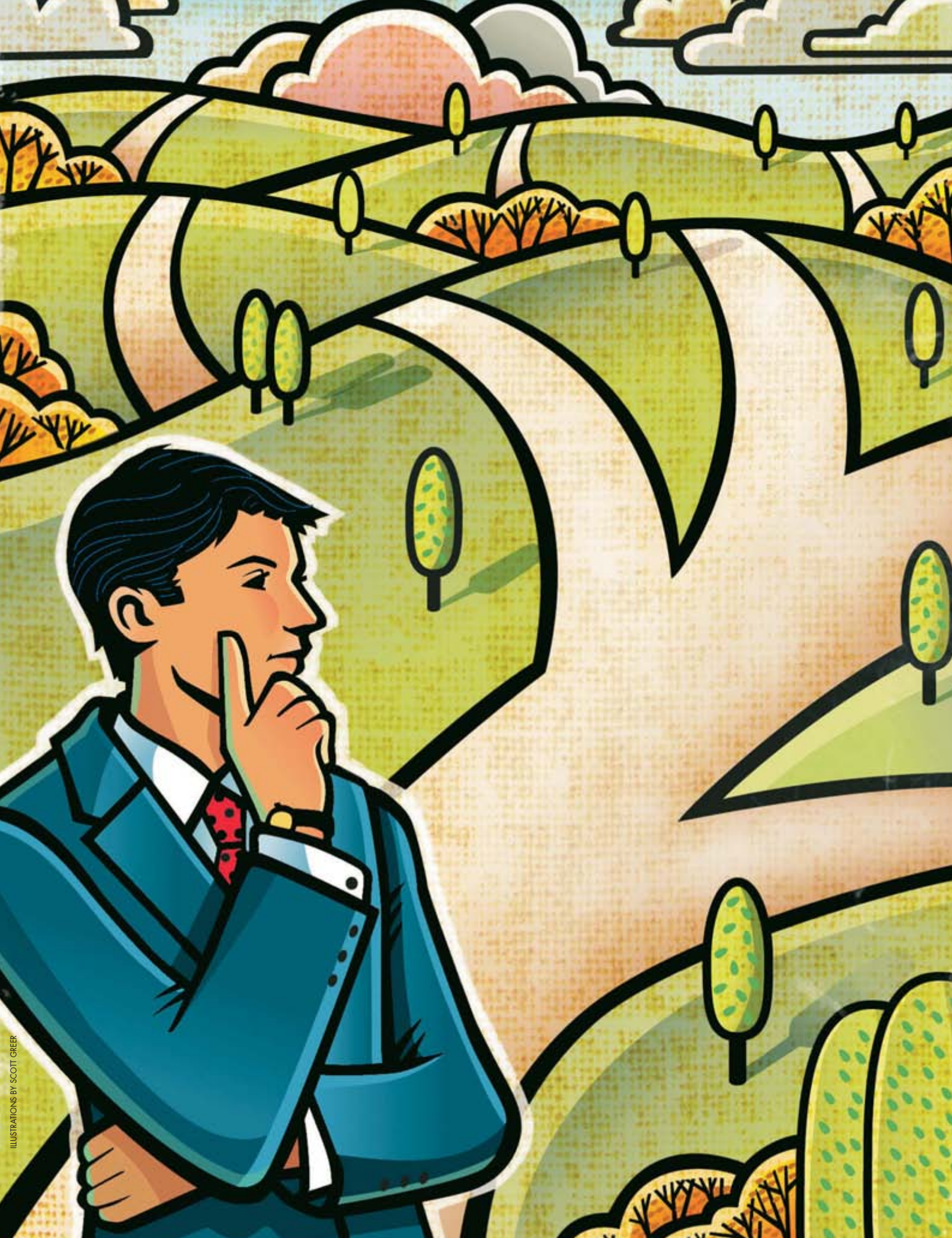
As a teenager, you are faced with decisions every day that can influence the course of your life and will decide what kind of

person you will become. You cannot see exactly where your future will lead, but you can ensure your future happiness by making righteous decisions now. Here are some guidelines that will help you when making important decisions. They will help get you on the path of righteousness and make sure you don't wander.

## **Gauge Your Decisions against the Standards**

Several years ago, I was in the market for a van. My wife and I had nine children, and we needed a larger vehicle. One day, I saw a big 12-passenger van for sale. I contacted the owner, who let me take it for a test drive. I was worried about the height of the van, so I decided to drive it home to see if it would fit in our garage.

I eyeballed the van and the garage door, and it looked like the van was too tall. I got a tape measure and measured the van, then the garage door. Sure enough, the van was too tall. But I wanted the van so badly; I wanted it to fit! So I called my wife out and said, "Come out and watch this. I'm going to





try to pull the van into the garage and see if I can make it.” Luckily, before I actually tried to pull the van in, I thought, *Wait a minute, I know I can’t make it!* I realized that I had two reliable standards already. When I looked at the van, I could see it was too tall. And when I measured the door and the van, I could see the van wouldn’t fit. Yet I was almost willing to risk damage to the van and the garage by trying to drive it in. My personal desires almost kept me from trusting the standards.

When you have difficult choices to make, use your parents, your leaders, words of the prophets, and the scriptures as standards to see if your decisions fit, so to speak. The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet is another terrific resource. There’s no need to spend a lot of time worrying about many of the choices you’re faced with, because the answers are right there in that little pamphlet. It contains very specific guidelines for music, media, dress, and so forth. Follow the standards it contains. Don’t be like those who think, “If I look at this standard from a different angle, maybe my unrighteous decision will fit.”

### **Ask If It Leads to Christ**

You will find joy as you make choices that help you follow the Savior. Everything our Heavenly Father does is calculated to bring us joy and happiness. “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). On the other hand, Satan’s devices always lead to misery. But he tries to disguise this fact. He tells us, “Commit this sin and it will make you happy.” But it’s a lie. Sin always leads to misery. Remember Alma’s words to Corianton: “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

Mormon's counsel in Moroni 7 is very wise. In verses 16 and 17 he says: "Wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

"But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil."

When you are faced with an important decision, be sure that your choice will lead you nearer to Christ.

### **Be Courageous**

It is important that you come to understand how the Holy Ghost works in your life. Learn to recognize and understand the Spirit's gentle promptings, and have the courage to always follow them. When you are faced with a hard decision, following the Holy Ghost can make all the difference.

I remember once, while on a break from high school, a friend and I decided to go hiking through the slot canyons in southern Utah. We drove for several hours to our destination and then hiked to a nice campsite by the river and spent the night.

When we got up in the morning, all my excitement for our hiking trip was gone. Instead, I had a feeling that we ought to return home. For more than two hours this feeling kept bothering me; then suddenly, it went away. I felt so relieved because, frankly, I was afraid to share my feelings with my friend. We'd spent so many hours driving and hiking to our campsite and planned to spend

several more days hiking and camping. I was afraid of what my friend would think of me if I said, "I think we ought to go home."

After lunch, my friend left the campsite to be alone for a few minutes. When he returned, he said, "I think we'd better go home."

"I do, too," I said. We cut our trip short and went home.

Today I still think about that experience. I didn't listen to the Spirit—or at least I didn't act on the promptings I felt—and the Spirit left me. I am grateful that my friend had the courage to listen and follow.

You also have the Holy Ghost to give you direction. You know what is right. You can feel it. You know when you're not supposed to watch a certain movie or play a particular video game. You may be tempted to ignore or go against the promptings of the Spirit because you are afraid of how others will react to your decision. Be courageous and do what you know is right.

### **Now Is the Time**

As a teenager, you face challenging decisions on a regular basis. The choices you make now will shape your character and help to determine the person you will be years from now. Don't wait until you're an adult to figure out how to recognize the Spirit; learn now. The Lord will be generous in providing you with opportunities to *feel* what is right. If you learn to recognize and follow the Spirit, your life will be blessed forever, and you will receive the guidance you need in making important choices. **NE**

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