

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*How can I stand up in the workplace for what I believe without seeming self-righteous or judgmental?*

I am a research scientist, and most of my peers follow a secular philosophy. Typically, they avoid making value judgments and try to show respect for another person's religion. My secular colleagues become defensive if they are misinterpreted as being judgmental or disrespectful when they merely intend to share their observations.

***I have learned not to respond to co-workers' questions as though they were criticizing me.***



I have learned not to respond to their comments or questions as though they were criticizing me. Instead, I speak straightforwardly and unapologetically. I answer their questions frankly—in the same way I answer their questions about my scientific opinions and research methods. I have found that even our disagreements offer me chances to grow and develop in my faith, just as scientific disagreements offer me opportunities to grow and develop in my understanding of the natural world.

I have been privileged to have many open and enlightening discussions about my religion with my peers, and though we choose to live according to different beliefs and standards, we can do so with mutual respect and understanding.

**Soren Harvard, Pennsylvania**

One of the most enjoyable jobs I've had was with a large company consisting of mostly young men who were good employees and fun individuals. However, some of them used language that made me cringe. I had many a late-night discussion with my wife about how to approach the situation. I didn't want to seem self-righteous or strain relationships.

After much prayer, I decided that I just needed to be straightforward and politely let these individuals know that their cursing made me uncomfortable. Most of them, though surprised at my request, apologized and made noticeable efforts to clean up their language around me. It helped that I had established good relationships

with them and had proven myself a hard worker.

I have also learned that we need to do what is right despite what others might think about us. If we do so, Heavenly Father will bless us. For example, while I was still working at this same company, I was regularly expected to work very long hours. Between this and a demanding Church calling, I realized that my family and I were suffering because I had so little time for them.

I had a very honest and professional conversation with my boss and let him know that the hours were affecting my family life and that my family was more important than my job. He understood but couldn't make any guarantees. I knew that I would need to leave the company. As much as I miss the fun of the work and the friendships I had made there, it was the right choice. Heavenly Father has since blessed me to work for a wonderful company that places high value on work-life balance. My family is happy, and our testimonies have grown.

**Benjamin Defnet, Oregon**

I used to work as a nurse in a high-stress environment in which standards were dictated by the world. I was the first "Mormon" that many of my co-workers had ever met. I realized not only that my co-workers did not know or understand my beliefs but also that they were likely to judge the Church based on my actions.

I strove to avoid participating in spreading gossip, telling or listening

to inappropriate jokes and stories, or taking part in the often boisterous complaint sessions held at the nurses' station or break room, because these detracted from the Spirit. However, I tried to be respectful of co-workers' beliefs and personal decisions. I had to remember that even though we may not believe the same things or act in the same ways, we are all children of our Heavenly Father and all of us are valued and cherished by the Lord.

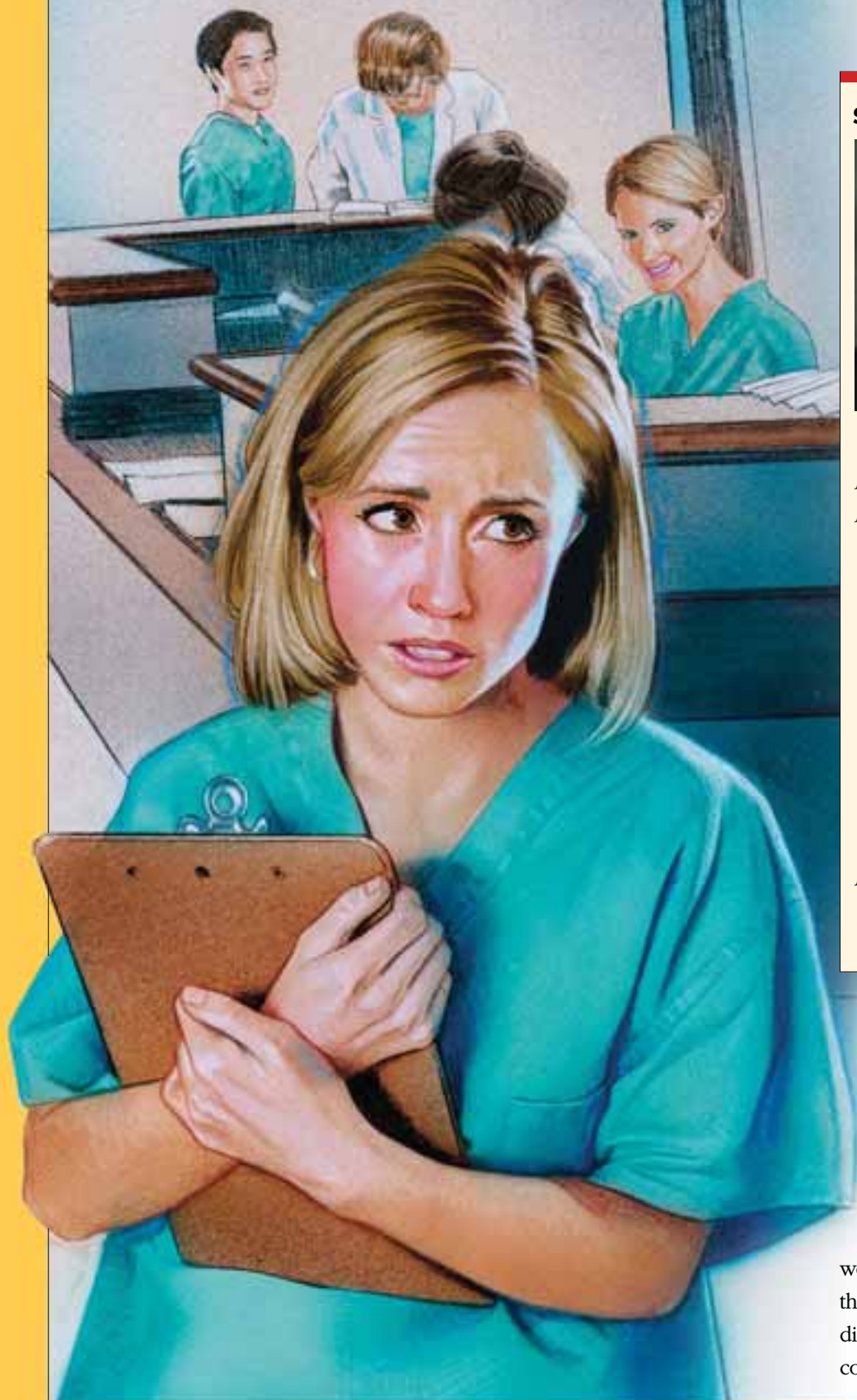
I also tried to have a positive, patient, and helpful attitude in hopes that my co-workers would find it easy to work with me. Although I wasn't perfectly successful, I confidently and reverently shared my gospel beliefs and standards when approached and when appropriate.

I learned that by politely avoiding situations and behaviors that detract from the Spirit and by showing Christlike love for others, I was able to stand up for what I believe while maintaining positive relationships with my co-workers.

**Name Withheld**

I work with a small group of women for a few hours each week. About a year ago a new woman joined our group. She often used foul language. I was very uncomfortable but didn't want to appear "preachy" by asking her to stop talking that way. Since I didn't know her very well, I was not sure what her reaction to my comments would be. However, I decided that if I didn't say something, the atmosphere would continue to deteriorate.

**When a co-worker swore, I explained that I wasn't comfortable listening to that language. Even though she didn't understand my point of view, she immediately began to make changes.**



#### **STANDING FOR TRUTH**



*“We need individuals who have the spiritual, righteous influence that will motivate*

*others to enduring good. We need politicians of integrity, business-people who are honest and morally clean, attorneys who defend justice and the legal system, and government officials who preserve principle because it is right. Above all, we need mothers and fathers who will preserve the sanctity and safety of the home and the integrity of the family, where faith in God and obedience to His commandments are taught as the foundation of a productive life.”*

**Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Living Right,” Ensign, Jan. 2007, 14.**

I decided on an approach that I thought would bring some humor into the situation. The next time she used a particularly offensive word, I placed my hands over my ears and said, “That word hurts my ears.”

She was shocked. She said that we were all adults and she didn't see what the problem was. I explained that I didn't speak that way and I wasn't comfortable listening to that language.

I don't think anyone had ever told her that her language was offensive. Even though she didn't quite understand my point of view, she immediately began to make changes in the way she talked when we were together.

Now she seldom swears around me, and if something slips out she apologizes. The truly amazing part is that she is very protective of me and makes sure to explain to others that they need to watch how they talk around me.

It took a lot of courage to speak up, but I'm glad that I did. We have become friends. She respects me, and I have had opportunities to talk with her about the gospel.

**Carolyn Johnston, Canada**

When my wife and I married 30 years ago, I was a sales engineer for a raw materials company in California. My wife was a member of the Church at the time, but I was not. After a while I began to more fully appreciate my wife's beliefs, and I decided to take the missionary lessons. During this time I became concerned that my co-workers might no longer accept me because of the major life changes I was making as I began to live the gospel. However, one of my co-workers noticed that I was different and commented positively about what he had observed.

I admitted to him that I was worried that becoming a member might hurt my future as a successful employee. He assured me I was on the right track and then revealed that he was a bishop and

did not experience any difficulty being both a Mormon and a salesman. We had a prayer together in his office, and one month later I was baptized. My success was not hindered by any means, and as time progressed, my fellow

***I took a Book of Mormon to work each day.***



## SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Questions and Answers feature will focus on the following question:

*How do I achieve balance in my life given all the demands on my time?*

If you'd like to contribute your ideas and experiences, please label them "balanced life" and follow the submission guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by January 15th.

employees and customers respected me for following my convictions.

**Bill Dain, Utah**

When I first began working in my current job, I felt a little uncomfortable with the surroundings. My co-workers were friendly but sometimes crude. I learned that in order to be comfortable I needed to set an example.

I took a Book of Mormon to work each day. My co-workers often asked why I read this book instead of the Bible. I simply replied that studying the Book of Mormon provides me with inner peace and helps me get answers to my problems.

To help my co-workers understand my feelings about different topics, I shared copies of the *Ensign* with them and I talked with them about what they read. For example, my co-workers sometimes play music with a lot of profanity. I gave them an *Ensign* with an article about clean music. I then explained that I listen only to music that invites the Spirit into my life.

I have explained that I do not drink coffee or tea, and when they ask why, I explain the Word of Wisdom. They have respected me for my beliefs.

If one of my co-workers is discouraged, I sometimes will leave a sticky note on her desk to cheer her up, or I'll tell her that Heavenly Father loves her and I do too. Smiling and asking people how they are doing makes them feel good and gives them a chance to talk about their concerns and ask for advice. Doing these things has made a huge difference.

**Samantha Seenaraine, Guyana ■**