



**By President Boyd K. Packer**  
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Counsel to Youth

*Despite the opposition, trials, and temptations, you need not fail or fear.*

I speak to the youth more personally than I usually do, comparing my youth with yours.

You are precious beyond measure. I have seen you in dozens of countries and on every continent. You are much better than we were when young. You know more about the gospel. You are more mature and more faithful.

I am now 87 years old. You may wonder, at my age what I can contribute to your lives. I have been where you are and know where you are going. But you have not yet been where I am. I quote a few lines of classic poetry:

*The old crow is getting slow.  
The young crow is not.  
Of what the young crow does not know  
The old crow knows a lot.*

*At knowing things the old crow  
Is still the young crow's master.  
What does the slow old crow not know?  
—How to go faster.*

*The young crow flies above, below,  
And rings around the slow old crow.  
What does the fast young crow not know?  
—Where to go.<sup>1</sup>*

Not Wordsworth but classic poetry nonetheless!

With all that is going on in the world, with the lowering of moral standards, you young people are being raised in enemy territory.

We know from the scriptures that there was a war in heaven and that Lucifer rebelled and, with his followers, “was cast out into the earth.”<sup>2</sup> He is determined to disrupt our Heavenly Father’s plan and seeks to control the minds and actions of all. This influence is spiritual, and he “is abroad in the land.”<sup>3</sup>

But despite the opposition, trials, and temptations, you need not fail or fear.

When I was 17, about ready to graduate from high school as a very average student with some handicaps, as I thought, everything around us came apart one Sunday morning. The next day we were called to the high school auditorium. On the stage was a chair with a small radio. The principal switched on the radio. We then heard the voice of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as he announced that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. The United States was at war with Japan.

Later that scene was repeated. Again the voice of President Roosevelt, this time announcing that our country was at war with Germany. World War II had exploded across the world.

All at once our future was uncertain. We did not know what was ahead. Would we live to get married and have a family?

Today there are “wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth [is] in commotion.”<sup>4</sup> You, our youth, may feel uncertainty and insecurity in your lives. I want to counsel you and teach you and give you a warning about some things to do and some things not to do.

The gospel plan is “the great plan of happiness.”<sup>5</sup> The family is the center of that plan. The family depends on the worthy use of those life-giving powers that are in your body.

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” an inspired document issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we learn that in the premortal existence “all human beings—male and female—[were] created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic [and was established in that premortal existence]. . . .

“ . . . We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”<sup>6</sup>

The great penalty Lucifer and his followers brought upon themselves was that they were to be denied a mortal body.

Many of the temptations you face, certainly the most serious ones, relate to your body. You not only have power to create bodies for a new generation, but you also have agency.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.”<sup>7</sup> So every living soul who has a physical



body ultimately has power over the adversary. You suffer temptations because of your physical nature, but you also have power over him and his angels.

By the time we graduated from high school, many of our classmates had marched away to war, some of them never to return. The rest of us were soon to enter the military. We did not know about our future. Would we survive the war? Would there be enough of the world left when we returned?

Against the certainty that I would be drafted, I joined the air force. Soon I was in Santa Ana, California, for pre-flight training.

I did not then have a firm testimony that the gospel was true, but I knew that my seminary teachers, Abel S. Rich and John P. Lillywhite, knew it

was true. I had heard them testify, and I believed them. I thought to myself, “I will lean on their testimonies until I gain one of my own.” And so it was.

I had heard about patriarchal blessings but had not received one. In each stake there is an ordained patriarch who has the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of revelation. He is authorized to give personal and private blessings to those who come recommended by their bishops. I wrote to my bishop for a recommend.

J. Roland Sandstrom was the ordained patriarch living in the Santa Ana stake. He knew nothing about me and had never seen me before, but he gave me my blessing. In it I found answers and instruction.

While patriarchal blessings are very private, I will share a short quote from mine: “You shall be guided through

the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and you shall be warned of dangers. If you heed those warnings, our Heavenly Father will bless you so that you might again be united with your loved ones.”<sup>8</sup>

That word *if*, though small in print, loomed as big as the page. I would be blessed to return from the war *if* I kept the commandments and *if* I heeded the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Although that gift had been conferred upon me at baptism, I did not yet know what the Holy Ghost was or how the promptings work.

What I needed to know about the promptings I found in the Book of Mormon. I read that “angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, . . . feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the single greatest thing I learned from reading the Book of Mormon is that the voice of the Spirit comes as a *feeling* rather than a sound. You will learn, as I have learned, to “listen” for that voice that is *felt* rather than *heard*.

Nephi scolded his older brothers, saying, “Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words.”<sup>10</sup>

Some critics have said that these verses are in error because you *hear* words; you do not *feel* them. But if you know anything at all about spiritual communication, you know that the best word to describe what takes place is the word *feeling*.

The gift of the Holy Ghost, if you consent, will guide and protect you and even correct your actions. It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a



thought or a feeling put into your heart. The prophet Enos said, “The voice of the Lord came into my mind.”<sup>11</sup> And the Lord told Oliver Cowdery, “Behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you.”<sup>12</sup>

It is not expected that you go through life without making mistakes, but you will not make a major mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Spirit. This promise applies to all members of the Church.

Some will make critically serious mistakes, transgressing the laws of the gospel. Here it is time to remind you of the Atonement, repentance, and complete forgiveness to the point that you can become pure again. The Lord said, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”<sup>13</sup>

If the adversary should take you prisoner due to misconduct, I remind you that you hold the key that will unlock the prison door from the inside. You can be washed clean through the atoning sacrifice of the Savior Jesus Christ.

You may in time of trouble think that you are not worth saving because you have made mistakes, big or little, and you think you are now lost. That is *never* true! Only repentance can heal what hurts. But repentance *can* heal what hurts, no matter what it is.

If you are slipping into things that you should not slip into or if you are associating with people who are pulling you away in the wrong direction, that is the time to assert your independence, your agency. Listen to the voice of the Spirit, and you will not be led astray.

I say again that youth today are being raised in enemy territory with a declining standard of morality. But as a servant of the Lord, I promise that you will be protected and shielded from the attacks of the adversary *if* you will heed the promptings that come from the Holy Spirit.

Dress modestly; talk reverently; listen to uplifting music. Avoid all

#### **Leicester, England**



immorality and personally degrading practices. Take hold of your life and order yourself to be valiant. Because we depend so much on you, you will be remarkably blessed. You are never far from the sight of your loving Heavenly Father.

The strength of my testimony has changed since I felt a need to lean on the testimonies of my seminary teachers. Today I lean on others when I walk due to age and childhood polio but not from doubts regarding spiritual matters. I have come to believe, to understand, and to know the precious truths of the gospel and of the Savior Jesus Christ.

As one of His special witnesses, I testify that the outcome of this battle that began in the premortal life is not in question. Lucifer will lose.

We spoke earlier of crows. You young crows need not fly aimlessly to and fro, unsure of the path ahead. There are those who know the way. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”<sup>14</sup> The Lord organized His Church on the principle of keys and councils.

At the head of the Church sit 15 men sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators. Each of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles holds all of the priesthood keys necessary for directing the Church. The senior Apostle is prophet-President Thomas S. Monson, who is the only one authorized to exercise all of those keys.

The scriptures require that the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve work in councils and that the decisions of those councils be unanimous. And so it is. We trust the Lord to guide the way and seek only to do His will. We know that He has placed a great deal of trust in us, individually and collectively.



You must learn to “trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”<sup>15</sup> You must be trustworthy and surround yourself with friends who desire to be likewise.

Sometimes you might be tempted to think as I did from time to time in my youth: “The way things are going, the world’s going to be over with. The end of the world is going to come before I get to where I should be.” Not so! You can look forward to doing it right—getting married, having a family, seeing your children and grandchildren, maybe even great-grandchildren.

If you will follow these principles, you will be watched over and protected and you yourself will know by the promptings of the Holy Ghost which way to go, for “by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”<sup>16</sup> I promise you that it will be so and invoke a blessing upon you, our precious youth, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John Ciardi, “Fast and Slow,” *Fast and Slow: Poems for Advanced Children and Beginning Parents* (1975), 1. © 1975 by John L. Ciardi. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.
2. Revelation 12:9; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–26.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 52:14.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 45:26.
5. Alma 42:8.
6. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
8. Patriarchal blessing of Boyd K. Packer, given by J. Roland Sandstrom, Jan. 15, 1944.
9. 2 Nephi 32:3.
10. 1 Nephi 17:45; emphasis added.
11. Enos 1:10.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
14. Amos 3:7.
15. Proverbs 3:5.
16. Moroni 10:5.



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## You Matter to Him

*The Lord uses a scale very different from the world’s to weigh the worth of a soul.*

Moses, one of the greatest prophets the world has ever known, was raised by Pharaoh’s daughter and spent the first 40 years of his life in the royal halls of Egypt. He knew firsthand the glory and grandeur of that ancient kingdom.

Years later, on the top of a distant mountain, far removed from the splendor and magnificence of mighty Egypt, Moses stood in the presence of God and spoke to Him face to face as a man speaks with his friend.<sup>1</sup> During the course of that visitation, God showed Moses the workmanship of His hands, granting him a glimpse of His work and glory. When the vision ended, Moses fell to the earth for the space of many hours. When his strength finally returned, he realized something that, in all his years in Pharaoh’s court, had never occurred to him before.

“I know,” he said, “that man is nothing.”<sup>2</sup>

#### We Are Less Than We Suppose

The more we learn about the universe, the more we understand—at least in a small part—what Moses knew. The universe is so large, mysterious, and glorious that it is incomprehensible to the human mind. “Worlds without number have I created,” God said to Moses.<sup>3</sup> The wonders of the

night sky are a beautiful testimony of that truth.

There are few things that have filled me with such breathless awe as flying in the black of night across oceans and continents and looking out my cockpit window upon the infinite glory of millions of stars.

Astronomers have attempted to count the number of stars in the universe. One group of scientists estimates that the number of stars within range of our telescopes is 10 times greater than all the grains of sand on the world’s beaches and deserts.<sup>4</sup>

This conclusion has a striking similarity to the declaration of the ancient prophet Enoch: “Were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations.”<sup>5</sup>

Given the vastness of God’s creations, it’s no wonder the great King Benjamin counseled his people to “always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness.”<sup>6</sup>

#### We Are Greater Than We Suppose

But even though man is nothing, it fills me with wonder and awe to think that “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”<sup>7</sup>