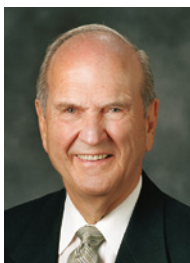


*May you choose to be a light to the world
to help save God's children, to have joy, and
ultimately to earn the blessing of eternal life.*





**By Elder
Russell M. Nelson**
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE?

*You were commissioned by your Heavenly Father
to build up the kingdom of God on earth right now
and to prepare a people to receive the Savior.*

As “youth of the noble birthright,”¹ you are literally sons and daughters of God, born at this particular time in the world’s history for a most sacred purpose. Although the moral and religious values of society seem to be weakening across the globe, youth of this Church are to be standard bearers of the Lord and beacons of light to attract others to Him. Your identity and purpose are unique.

What is your identity? You are children of the covenant that God made with Father Abraham when Abraham was promised that “in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (Acts 3:25; see also 1 Nephi 15:18; 3 Nephi 20:25). You are also “children of the promised day,”² this period of world history when the gospel is being broadly proclaimed across the entire planet.

What is your purpose? You brethren were foreordained in a premortal realm to bear the priesthood (see Alma 13:2–3). And you sisters were chosen before the foundation of the world to bear and care for God’s children; in doing so, you glorify God (see D&C 132:63). Have you sisters considered what it really means to be co-creators with God?

Each of you young men and young women was commissioned by your Heavenly Father to build up the kingdom of God on earth right now and to prepare a people to receive the Savior when He will rule and reign as the Millennial Messiah. Your noble birthright, identity, purpose, and divine commission set you apart from all others.

But neither your birthright nor your premortal ordinations and commissions can save or exalt you. You will do that through your individual decisions and as you choose to access the power of the Lord’s Atonement in your lives. The great eternal principle of agency is vital to our Father’s plan. So, you youth of the noble birthright, what will you choose?

Will you choose to increase in learning?

Education is yours to obtain. No one else can gain it for you. Wherever you are, develop a deep desire to learn. For us as Latter-day Saints, gaining an education is not just a privilege; it is a religious responsibility. “The glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36). Indeed, our education is for the eternities.

“Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

“And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life . . . , he [or she] will have so much the advantage in the world to come” (D&C 130:18–19).

Such a long-range perspective will help you make good choices about learning.

Don’t be afraid to pursue your goals—even your dreams! But know that there is no shortcut to excellence and competence. Education is the difference between *wishing* you could help other people and *being able* to help them.

What manner of living will you choose?

You are expected to live differently than others. You know what Paul said to young Timothy: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).³ Choose to think and act differently than those of the world. Choose to look different, and see what an influence for good you will become. As Ardeth G. Kapp, former Young Women general president, once said, “You can’t be a life saver if you look like all the other swimmers on the beach.”⁴

As youth of the noble birthright, you have a great start in life, but you also have an additional responsibility. “For of him [or her] unto whom much is given much is required” (D&C 82:3; see also Luke 12:48). Part of that requirement is to be a recruit. When you were baptized, you actually reenlisted in the Lord’s army.⁵ Premortally, you stood by Jesus Christ during the War in Heaven. And now the conflict between the forces of good and evil continues here on earth. It is real! (See Revelation 12:7–9; D&C 29:40–41). On God’s side is Jesus Christ,

foreordained to be the Savior of the world (see 1 Nephi 10:4). On the other side is Satan—a rebel, a destroyer of agency (see Moses 4:3).⁶

God’s plan allows the adversary to tempt you so that you can exercise your agency to choose good over evil, to choose to repent, to choose to come unto Jesus Christ and believe His teachings and follow His example. What a huge responsibility and a huge trust!

Your freedom to act for yourself is so central to your eternal progress and happiness that the adversary exerts extraordinary efforts to undermine it (see 2 Nephi 2:27; 10:23).

Will you establish priorities to help you make your choices?

Your choices will not all be between good and evil. Many will be choices between two good options. Not all truths are created equal, so you will need to establish priorities. In your pursuit of knowledge, know that the most important truth you can learn comes from the Lord. In His Intercessory Prayer to His Father, the Savior Himself confirmed this. He said, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Above everything else you are seeking to learn, seek to know God, your Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. Come to know Them and love Them, as I do.

Another priority scripture that has helped me throughout my life is this one: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

More than anything else in this world, you want to make choices that lead to the ultimate and glorious destiny of eternal life. That is God’s great glory for you (see D&C 14:7; Moses 1:39). Choose eternal life as your highest priority! Study the scriptures, such as sections 76 and 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants, to understand more about the different blessings awaiting those who choose eternal life and those who don’t. Choose eternal life as your highest priority, and notice how other choices fall into place.



Many people have not yet found divine truth and don't know where to look for it. But you youth of the noble birthright are coming to their rescue.

With whom will you choose to associate?

You will mingle with many good people who also believe in God. Whether they be Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, or Muslim, believers know that there actually is absolute truth. Believers in God have a conscience. Believers obey civil and divine law voluntarily, even laws that might otherwise be unenforceable.

With your commitment to obey civil and divine law, you stop for a red light, even if no other traffic is in sight. As a child of God you know, even if the police don't catch you, that stealing and murdering are wrong and that God will ultimately hold you accountable. You know that the consequences for not playing by the rules are not only temporal but also eternal.

As you move along life's journey, you will also become acquainted with people who do not believe in God. Many of them have not yet found divine truth and don't know

where to look for it. But you youth of the noble birthright are coming to their rescue. In great numbers, you are rallying to the call of God's prophet for more missionaries. We are deeply grateful for each one!

As you mingle with nonbelievers, be aware that there may be a few who do not have your best interest at heart (see D&C 1:16; 89:4). As soon as you discern that, flee from them quickly and permanently (see 1 Timothy 6:5–6, 11).

Sadly, you will meet people whose desperate search for something that seems to them like happiness takes them down the slippery slopes of sin. Beware of that slimy slide! Any pleasure in sin is only fleeting, while haunting memories of sin are filled with gnawing and grinding guilt. The sinful warping of the embrace divinely designed to unite husband and wife is but a hollow counterfeit. Each unlawful experience is stripped of deep meaning and sweet memory.

Will you choose freedom or bondage?

Godless forces are all around. You are literally living in enemy territory.⁷ A plague of poisonous pornography abounds. It ensnares all who yield to its insidious grasp.

This was foreseen by the Lord, who said, “And now I show unto you a mystery, a thing which is had in secret chambers, to bring to pass even your destruction in process of time, and ye knew it not” (D&C 38:13; see also verse 28).

Consider how many people in secret chambers are seeking to destroy your life and happiness! Carnal temptation is not new. The Apostle Peter warned of this same snare when he wrote:

“They allure through the lusts of the flesh . . . those that were clean. . . .

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:18–19).

Avoid that bondage, my beloved brothers and sisters. If you are currently viewing pornography, stop it now! Seek help from your bishop. None are smart enough to outwit the adversary on their own once they have been poisoned by pornography. It is as destructive as leprosy, as addictive as meth, and as corrosive as lye.

Will you choose to follow the Lord or the philosophies of men?

Carefully study “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”⁸ The family is under attack across the entire world, but the truths of the family proclamation will fortify you.

You need to understand the far-reaching consequences of society’s current skirmish over the definition of marriage. The present debate involves the question of whether two people of the same gender can be married. If you have a question about the position of the Church on this or any other important issue, prayerfully ponder it and then heed the prophetic messages of living prophets. Their inspired words, with inspiration from the Holy Ghost, will bring to your mind a fuller and truer understanding.⁹

The marriage debate is but one of the many controversies

that will challenge you in the future. Against the strident voices of the adversary, you, as youth of the noble birthright, will choose to stand for the Lord and His truth.

The Apostle Paul prophesied about the plight of our day (see 2 Timothy 3:1–5). His accurate vision of the spiritual devastation of our day was followed by his reassuring conclusion, telling us how to stay safe: “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

To his advice I add my own: Keep studying the scriptures. Keep doing the things that build your faith in Jesus Christ. And then notice the wise choices you are naturally drawn to make.

Your faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel will give you the courage to marry and to bring children into your family while you are young and able to have them. When you are my age, you will prize your children, your grandchildren, and their children above any fame or fortune that otherwise might have come.

How will you prepare for your personal interview with the Savior?

You youth of the noble birthright are not perfect yet. None of us are. So you, along with the rest of us, are very grateful for the Atonement of the Savior, which provides full forgiveness as you truly repent. You also know that your stay here in mortality is relatively brief. In time, each of you will graduate from this frail existence and move on to the next world.

Judgment Day awaits each of us. I know that “the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there” (2 Nephi 9:41). Yes, each of us will have a personal interview with Jesus Christ.

Each day on earth gives you time and opportunity to prepare for that interview. Please know this: As you choose to live on the Lord’s side, you are never alone. God has given you access to His help while you move along mortality’s perilous pathway. As you diligently, earnestly pour out your heart to Him in daily prayer, He will send His angels to help you (see D&C 84:88). He has given you



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the Holy Ghost to be by your side as you live worthily. He has given you the scriptures so that you can fully feast upon the words of Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 9:51; 32:3). He has given you words to heed from living prophets.

In whom will you put your trust?

You know that God is your Father. He loves you. He wants you to be happy. Put your trust in Him (see 2 Nephi 4:34; 28:31). Maintain your focus on His holy temple. Be worthy to receive your endowment and sealing ordinances. Remain faithful to those covenants, and return frequently to the temple. Remember, your loftiest goal is to gain the greatest of all the blessings of God, that of eternal life (see D&C 14:7). Temple ordinances are essential for that blessing (see D&C 131:1–3).

I invite you to prayerfully study the scriptural statement of your identity, purpose, and blessing (see D&C 86:8–11). Yes, you truly are youth of the noble birthright, created

in God's image. You are the lawful heirs, to be tried and tested. May you choose to be a light to the world to help save God's children, to have joy, and ultimately to earn the blessing of eternal life. ■

From a Church Educational System devotional address, "Youth of the Noble Birthright: What Will You Choose?" delivered at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on September 6, 2013. For the full address, go to cesdevotionals.lds.org.

NOTES

1. "Carry On," *Hymns*, no. 255.
2. "Hope of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 259.
3. The Greek word *anastrophe*, from which *conversation* was translated, means an upward manner of living.
4. Ardeth Greene Kapp, *I Walk by Faith* (1987), 97.
5. See "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, no. 250.
6. Some people describe agency as *free agency*, but that expression is not scriptural. Scripture speaks only of *moral agency* (see D&C 101:78).
7. See Boyd K. Packer, "Counsel to Youth," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 16, 18.
8. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
9. The Church's inspired proclamation on the family states: "The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129).