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O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One

There is hope for the addicted, and this hope comes through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the advent of the fall season here in the Rocky Mountains brings with it the glorious colors of leaves transforming from green to blazing oranges, reds, and yellows. During the fall all nature is in a state of transition, preparing for the cold, austere beauty of winter.

Autumn is a particularly exciting time for the fly fishermen, for this is the time trout are driven by an almost insatiable hunger to feast in order to fortify their bodies against the scarcity of winter food.

The goal of the fly fisherman is to catch trout through skillful deception. The adept fisherman studies trout behavior, weather, the water current, and the types of insects trout eat and when those insects hatch. He will often craft by hand the lures he uses. He knows these artificial insects embedded with tiny hooks need to be a perfect deception because the trout will identify even the slightest flaw and reject the fly.

What a thrill it is to watch a trout break the surface of the water, inhale the fly, and resist until it is finally exhausted and reeled in. The test is the pitting of the fisherman's knowledge

and skill against the noble trout.

The use of artificial lures to fool and catch a fish is an example of the way Lucifer often tempts, deceives, and tries to ensnare us.

Like the fly fisherman who knows that trout are driven by hunger, Lucifer knows our "hunger," or weaknesses, and tempts us with counterfeit lures which, if taken, can cause us to be yanked from the stream of life into his unmerciful influence. And unlike a fly fisherman who catches and releases the fish unharmed back into the water, Lucifer will not voluntarily let go. His goal is to make his victims as miserable as he is.

Lehi said, "And because he [Lucifer] had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind" (2 Nephi 2:18).

I add my voice today to the voices of my Brethren that Lucifer is a clever and cunning intelligence. One of the main methods he uses against us is his ability to lie and deceive to convince us that evil is good and good is evil. Right from the very beginning in the great Council in Heaven, Satan "sought to destroy the agency of man, which I,

the Lord God, had given him. . . .

"And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will" (Moses 4:3–4).

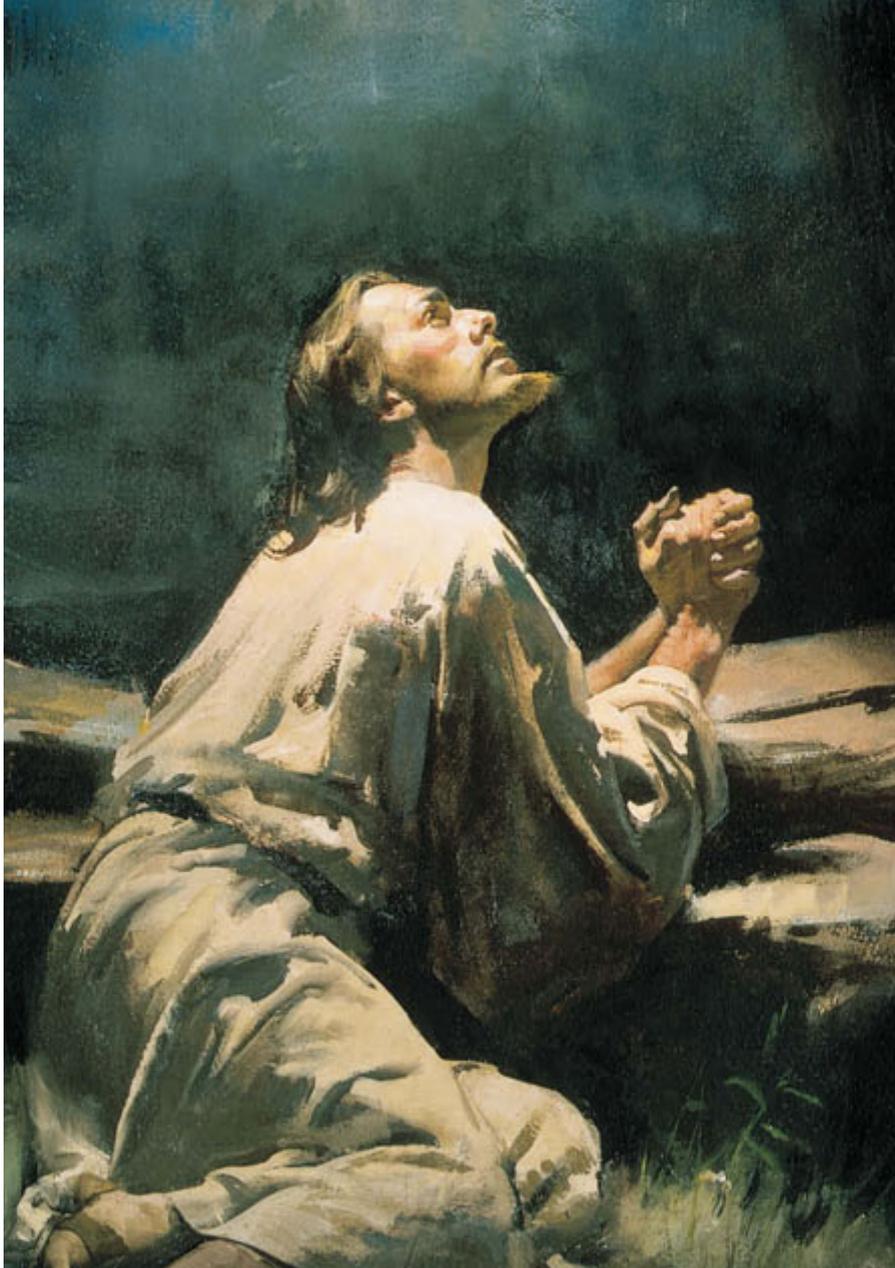
The battle over man's God-given agency continues today. Satan and his minions have their lures all around us, hoping that we will falter and take his flies so he can reel us in with counterfeit means. He uses addiction to steal away agency. According to the dictionary, addiction of any kind means to surrender to something, thus relinquishing agency and becoming dependent on some life-destroying substance or behavior.¹

Researchers tell us there is a mechanism in our brain called the pleasure center.² When activated by certain drugs or behaviors, it overpowers the part of our brain that governs our willpower, judgment, logic, and morality. This leads the addict to abandon what he or she knows is right. And when that happens, the hook is set and Lucifer takes control.

Satan knows how to exploit and ensnare us with artificial substances and behaviors of temporary pleasure. I have observed the impact when one struggles to win back control, to become free from destructive abuse and addiction, and to regain self-esteem and independence.

Some of the most addictive drugs that, if abused, can hijack the brain and take away one's agency include nicotine; opiates—heroin, morphine, and other painkillers; tranquilizers; cocaine; alcohol; marijuana; and methamphetamines.

I am grateful for doctors who are trained to prescribe proper medications to relieve pain and suffering. Unfortunately, too many in our communities today, including some of our own members, become addicted to



and then abuse prescription medications. Lucifer, the father of all lies, knows this and uses his influence to steal away one's agency and capture the abuser with his awful chains (see 2 Nephi 28:22).

Recently I talked to a sister who was in the psychiatric unit of a local hospital. She shared with me her sorrowful journey from complete mental and physical health, a wonderful marriage and family, into mental illness, debilitating health, and the breakup of her family—all of which started with the abuse of prescription painkillers.

Two years prior to our conversation, she hurt her back in a car accident. Her doctor prescribed a medication to relieve the almost unbearable pain. She

thought she needed something more, so she forged prescriptions and finally resorted to buying heroin. This led to her arrest and incarceration. Her obsession with drugs caused her marriage to fail. Her husband divorced her and retained custody of the children. She told me that besides helping to dull her pain, the drugs also provided a short-term but heightened sense of euphoria and well-being. But each dosage of drugs lasted only a few hours, and with each use the duration of relief seemed to lessen. She began to take more and more of the drugs and got caught up in the vicious cycle of addiction. Drugs became her life. The night before I talked with her, she tried to commit suicide. She said she could no longer

deal with the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. She felt trapped with no way out—with no hope.

This sister's problem with prescription and other drug abuse is not unique; it is happening all around us. In some places more people die from prescription drug abuse than die from automobile accidents.³ Brothers and sisters, stay away from any kind of substance that may trap you. Even one sniff of something or one pill or one drink of alcohol can lead to addiction. A recovering alcoholic told me that just one drink is the difference between addiction and sobriety. Satan knows this. Do not let him hook you with his artificial lures that can quickly turn into addiction.

Now, brothers and sisters, please don't misunderstand what I am saying. I'm not questioning prescription medications for those suffering with treatable illness or great physical pain. They are indeed a blessing. What I am saying is that we need to carefully follow the doses prescribed by doctors. And we need to keep such medications in a safe place where youngsters or anyone else cannot gain access to them.

There is also great concern about some of the pernicious, addictive behaviors like gambling and evil pornography that are so personally destructive and so rampant in our society. Remember, brothers and sisters, any kind of addiction is to surrender to something, thus relinquishing agency and becoming dependent. Thus, video-gaming and texting on cell phones need to be added to the list. Some gamers claim to spend up to 18 hours a day going through level after level of video games, neglecting all other aspects of their lives. Texting on cell phones can become an addiction, causing the important interpersonal human communication



to become lost. Not long ago a bishop told me two of his youth were standing side by side texting one another rather than talking to each other.

Medical research describes addiction as “a disease of the brain.”⁴ This is true, but I believe that once Satan has someone in his grasp, it also becomes a disease of the spirit. But no matter what addictive cycle one is caught in, there is always hope. The prophet Lehi taught his sons this eternal truth: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27).

If anyone who is addicted has a desire to overcome, then there is a way to spiritual freedom—a way to escape from bondage—a way that is proven. It begins with prayer—sincere, fervent, and constant communication with the Creator of our spirits and bodies, our Heavenly Father. It is the same principle in breaking a bad habit or repenting from sin of any kind. The formula for having our heart, our body, our mind, and our spirit transformed is found in the scriptures.

The prophet Mormon counseled us: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love . . . ; that ye may become the sons of God; . . . that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48).

This and many other scriptures

testify to us there is hope for the addicted, and this hope comes through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and by humbling oneself before God, pleading to be freed of the bondage of addiction and offering our whole soul to Him in fervent prayer.

Priesthood leaders can help as those with addictions seek counsel from them. Where necessary, they can refer them to qualified licensed counselors and LDS Family Services. The addiction recovery program, adapted from the original 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, is readily available through LDS Family Services.

To those who are dealing with an addiction personally or within your family, I repeat, fervent prayer is key to gaining the spiritual strength to find peace and overcome an addictive craving. Heavenly Father loves all of His children, so thank Him and express sincere faith in Him. Ask Him for the strength to overcome the addiction you are experiencing. Set aside all pride and turn your life and your heart to Him. Ask to be filled with the power of Christ’s pure love. You may have to do this many times, but I testify to you that your body, mind, and spirit can be transformed, cleansed, and made whole, and you will be freed. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Because our goal is to become more like our Savior and to eventually qualify to live with our Heavenly Father, each of us needs to experience the mighty change in our hearts described by the

prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 5:14). Our love for our Father in Heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ needs to be reflected in our daily choices and actions. They have promised peace, joy, and happiness to those who keep Their commandments.

Brothers and sisters, may we all be aware of the artificial flies being presented to us by the counterfeit fisher of men, Lucifer. May we have the wisdom and spiritual insight to discern and refuse his many dangerous offerings.

And for those of you who have fallen prey to any kind of addiction, there is hope because God loves all of His children and because the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ makes all things possible.

I have seen the marvelous blessing of recovery that can set one free from the chains of addiction. The Lord is our Shepherd, and we shall not want as we trust in the power of the Atonement. I know the Lord can and will free the addicted from their bondage, for as the Apostle Paul proclaimed, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). I pray, my brothers and sisters, that this may be so with those who may be struggling with this challenge at this time in their lives, and do so humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. As a noun, *addiction* has three senses, one being “a surrender to a master” (audioenglish.net/dictionary/addiction.htm).
2. See National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior—the Science of Addiction* (2010), 18, drugabuse.gov/scienceofaddiction/sciofaddiction.pdf.
3. See Erika Potter, “Drug Deaths Overtake Auto Deaths in Utah,” Dec. 2009, universe.byu.edu/node/4477.
4. See National Institute on Drug Abuse, “The Neurobiology of Drug Addiction,” section IV, no. 30, drugabuse.gov/pubs/teaching/teaching2/teaching5.html; see also drugabuse.gov/funding/budget08.html.