

Agency and Accountability



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There is a story told of an old Cherokee teaching his grandson about life. “A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy.

“It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves. One is evil: he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.”

He continued, “The other is good: he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you—and inside every other person too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

Agency and Premortality

Eons of time ago, when we were all in the presence of our Father in Heaven, there was a Grand Council held. In that council our Father, desiring that we have the same joy and happiness that He enjoys, presented His plan whereby we could come to this earth, gain a

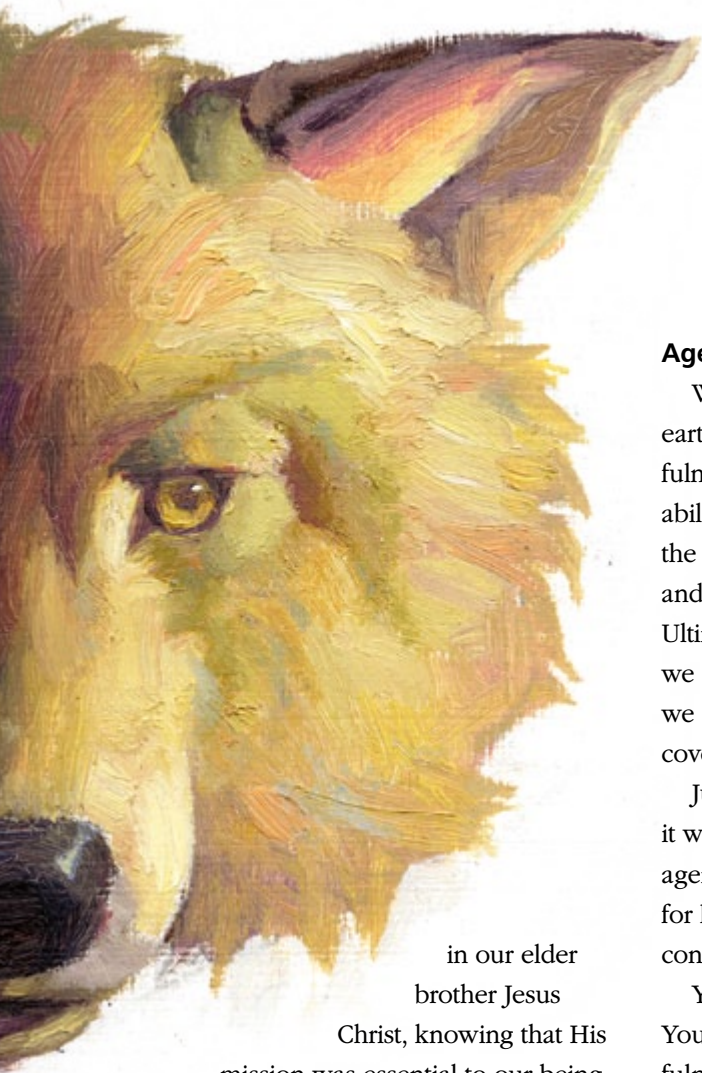
physical body, and experience the bitter and the sweet of this life. We could choose to keep His commandments and become like Him or choose not to keep His commandments and deny ourselves of the joy and blessings He promises.

A central part of our Father’s plan was that we would be free to choose. This gift is called agency, the power to choose. The companion of agency is always accountability. We are individually responsible for the choices we make.

When Heavenly Father asked who would carry out the plan, Lucifer offered to redeem all mankind under his conditions, where agency would be denied and he would receive all the glory. This would frustrate God’s eternal plan of happiness.

Jesus Christ offered Himself to be the Savior in the Father’s plan. He chose to submit to the plan of the Father. We put our faith





in our elder
brother Jesus
Christ, knowing that His
mission was essential to our being
able to return to our Father's kingdom.

What happened to Lucifer? The Father said:

"Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

"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, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice" (Moses 4:3–4).

Because agency is an eternal principle and Heavenly Father would not violate it, He lost one-third of His children, who chose to follow Satan.

Agency and Mortality

What then is the purpose of life on this earth? One key purpose is to prove our faithfulness (see Abraham 3:24–25). We have the ability to know right from wrong. We have the power given to us from God "to act . . . and not to be acted upon" (2 Nephi 2:26). Ultimately, we will receive the kingdom that we desire according to the commandments we obey, the ordinances we receive, and the covenants we keep.

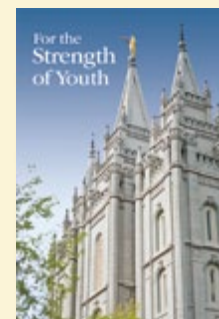
Just as the wise old Cherokee explained, it was up to him which wolf he fed. He had agency, and he alone would be accountable for his choice. He would have to live with the consequences of his choices.

You are the youth of the noble birthright. You have been sent to the earth when the fulness of the gospel is here. You have been baptized and confirmed so that you can receive, if you desire, the Holy Ghost as your constant companion. You have made baptismal covenants. And young men, you have made additional priesthood covenants.

You have agency to choose eternal life by keeping yourself clean and worthy to enter into God's holy temple and receive the ordinances that will allow you to return to the presence of the Father. You can choose the blessing of eternal life, to live the life that God lives for all eternity with your family. You have the potential to receive all that the Father has. The choice is yours.

Use your God-given agency wisely. ■

Future issues will have more articles about standards in the new For the Strength of Youth.



KEY IDEAS ABOUT AGENCY

"The right to direct your life is one of God's greatest gifts to you. . . .

"You are responsible for the choices you make. . . .

"While you are free to choose your course of action, you are not free to choose the consequences."

For the Strength of Youth (2011), 2.