

THE New Era

OCTOBER

2008

**SPECIAL ISSUE:
YOU CAN
STAND STRONG**



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You Can Be Strong

Be strong. Stand tall. Every day you face opportunities to do both, and every day you can find the strength you need, through faith, prayer, and obedience. *For the Strength of Youth*, full of counsel from prophets and apostles, will help you, and so can this special issue of the *New Era*.

Inside, you'll find lots of ideas and experiences from youth like you. You'll also find some great suggestions about using *For the Strength of Youth* to become stronger and stronger each day.

**WORDS OF THE PROPHET:
STANDARDS OF STRENGTH p. 2****Words of the Prophet:
Standards of Strength 2**

President Thomas S. Monson
Don't put your eternal life at risk. Keep the commandments of God.

My Personal Tryout 6

Tyler Clark
I was trying out for basketball, but I ended up on the Lord's side.

**In Tune:
Steadfast and Immovable 8**

Jan Pinborough and Jim Kasen
Now you can listen to this song being performed on newera.lds.org.

What Joseph Taught: Agency 9

Our ability to choose between good and evil is an important part of the Lord's plan.

The Man with Answers 10

Don Searle
Friends know to ask Christian Monzón of Paraguay about life's tough questions.

**Mormonad:
Measure Up 13****Questions and Answers 14**

"My friends and I have a problem with gossiping and saying mean things about others. What can I do to stop and help them stop?"

**Idea List:
Sunday Best 16**

Hillary Holbrook
Instead of what you can't do on Sunday, here is a list of great things you can do.

18 Ways to Stand Strong 17

Here are stories and examples for each of the 18 topics covered in For the Strength of Youth.

**Be Wary of
Wooden Horses 30**

Elder Kenneth Johnson
Our surroundings can have a significant impact on how we feel and the way we behave.

**Talking about
Standards 34**

Janet Thomas
Teens in New Hampshire have to stand up for their standards every day.

**What's Not on the
Warning Label 38**

Brad Wilcox
Alcohol and cigarettes have warning labels, but the true dangers aren't listed.





**BE WARY
OF WOODEN
HORSES,
p. 30**

No Regrets 42

Name Withheld

About to make a serious mistake, one couple resists, and the decision blesses their lives.

Line upon Line: **1 Corinthians 10:13** 45

Instant Messages 46

Honesty is more important; just being grateful; what's your price?

The Extra Smile 48

Poem: **My Kite** 49

Erin Camp Worland

Photo 49

Jacey Erickson

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COVER STORY:
18 WAYS TO STAND STRONG, p. 17

STANDARDS *of* STRENGTH

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others.



The lighthouse of the Lord sends forth signals readily recognized and never failing. These words of warning, these safety standards, are printed in a small booklet entitled For the Strength of Youth.

Y oung people, you live in tumultuous times. You have choices to make—choices with eternal consequences. But you are not left unaided in your decisions, however small or however large they may be.¹

Permissiveness, immorality, pornography, and the power of peer pressure cause many to be tossed about on a sea of sin and crushed on the jagged reefs of lost opportunities, forfeited blessings, and shattered dreams.

Anxiously you ask, “Is there a way to safety? Can someone guide me? Is there an escape from threatened destruction? The answer is a resounding yes! I counsel you: Look to the lighthouse of the Lord. There is no fog so dense, no night so dark, no gale so strong, no mariner so lost but what its beacon light can rescue. It beckons through the storms of life. It calls, “This way to safety; this way to home.”

The lighthouse of the Lord sends forth signals readily recognized and never failing. These words of warning, these safety standards, are printed in a small booklet . . . entitled *For the Strength of Youth*.²

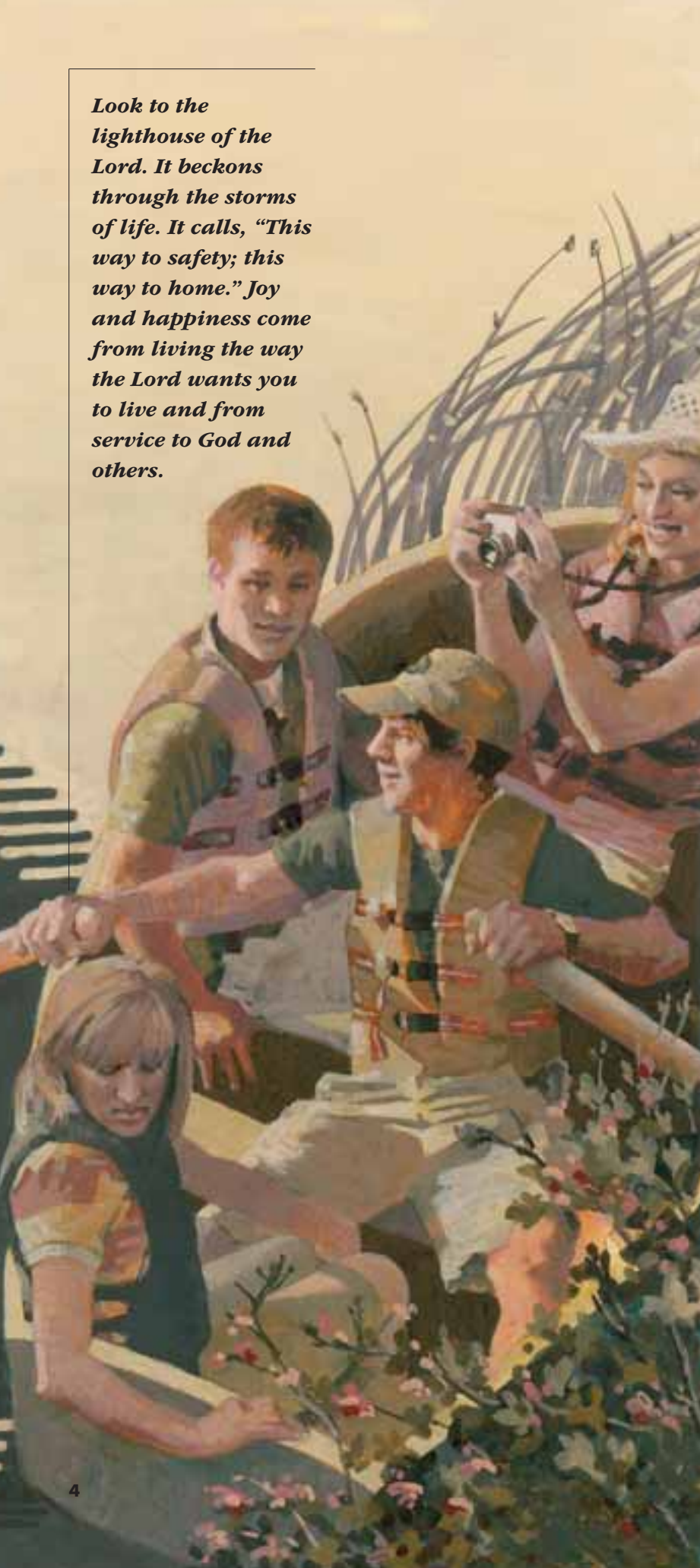
Your Code of Conduct

Precious young people, make every decision you contemplate pass this test: What does it do to me? What does it do for me? And let your code of conduct emphasize not “What will others think?” but rather “What will I think of myself?” Be influenced by that still, small voice. Remember that one with authority placed his hands on your head at the time of your confirmation and said, “Receive the Holy Ghost.” Open your hearts, even your very souls, to the sound of that special voice that testifies of truth. As the prophet Isaiah promised, “Thine ears shall hear a word . . . saying, This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21).

The tenor of our times is permissiveness. A most popular feature of one of the leading newspaper Sunday supplements portrays the idols of the movie screen, the heroes of the athletic field—those whom many young people long to emulate—as flouting the laws of God and rationalizing away sinful practices, seemingly with no ill effect. Don’t you believe it! There is a time of reckoning—even a balancing of the ledger. It’s called Judgment Day, even the Big Exam of Life.



Look to the lighthouse of the Lord. It beckons through the storms of life. It calls, "This way to safety; this way to home." Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others.



Are we prepared? Are we pleased with our own performances?³

Honesty

For some, there will come the temptation to dishonor a personal standard of honesty. In a business law class at the university I attended, I remember that one particular classmate never prepared for the class discussions. I thought to myself, "How is he going to pass the final examination?"

I discovered the answer when he came to the classroom for the final examination, on a winter's day, wearing on his bare feet only a pair of sandals. I was surprised and watched him as the class began. All of his books had been placed upon the floor. He slipped the sandals from his feet; and then, with toes that he had trained and had prepared with glycerine, he skillfully turned the pages of one of the books which he had placed on the floor, thereby viewing the answers to the examination questions.

He received one of the highest grades in that course on business law. But the day of reckoning came. Later, as he prepared to take his comprehensive examination, for the first time the dean of his particular discipline said, "This year I shall depart from tradition and shall conduct an oral, rather than a written, test." Our favorite, trained-toe expert found that he had his foot in his mouth on that occasion and failed the examination.⁴

Entertainment and Media

Our Heavenly Father has counseled us to seek after "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Articles of Faith 1:13.) Whatever you read, listen to, or watch makes an impression on you.⁵

Don't be afraid to walk out of a movie, turn off a television set, or change a radio station if what's being presented does not meet your Heavenly Father's standards. In short, if you have any question about whether a particular movie, book, or other form of entertainment is appropriate, don't see it, don't read it, don't participate.⁶ Some publishers and printers prostitute their presses by printing millions of pieces of pornography each day. No expense is spared to produce a product certain to be viewed, then viewed again. One of the most accessible sources of pornography today is the Internet, where one can turn on a computer and instantly have at his fingertips countless sites featuring pornography. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "I fear this may be going on in some of your homes. It is vicious. It is lewd and filthy. It is enticing and habit-forming. It will take [you] down to destruction as surely as anything in this world. It is foul sleaze that makes its exploiters wealthy, its victims impoverished" ("Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51).⁷

Sexual Purity

Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage, as well as full fidelity after marriage. In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you. Tears inevitably follow transgression. Men, take care not to make women weep, for God counts their tears.

President David O. McKay advised, "I implore you to think clean thoughts." He then made this significant declaration of truth: "Every action is preceded by a thought. If we want to control our actions, we must control our thinking." Brethren, fill your minds with good thoughts, and your actions will be proper. May each one of you be able to echo in truth the line from Tennyson spoken by Sir Galahad: "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure" (*Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed., ed. Angela Partington, 689).⁸

Mental and Physical Health

The Apostle Paul declared, "Know ye not that ye are

the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). Nutritious meals, regular exercise, and appropriate sleep are necessary for a strong body, just as consistent scripture study and prayer strengthen the mind and spirit.

Hard drugs, wrongful use of prescription drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco products destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Any form of alcohol, including beer, is harmful to your spirit and your body. Tobacco can enslave you, weaken your lungs, and shorten your life.⁹

Repentance

If any has stumbled in his journey, there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Our Savior died to provide you and me that blessed gift. Though the path is difficult, the promise is real: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Don't put your eternal life at risk. Keep the commandments of God. If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

These, then, are the standards found in *For the Strength of Youth*. Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others. . . .

You have a heritage: Honor it.

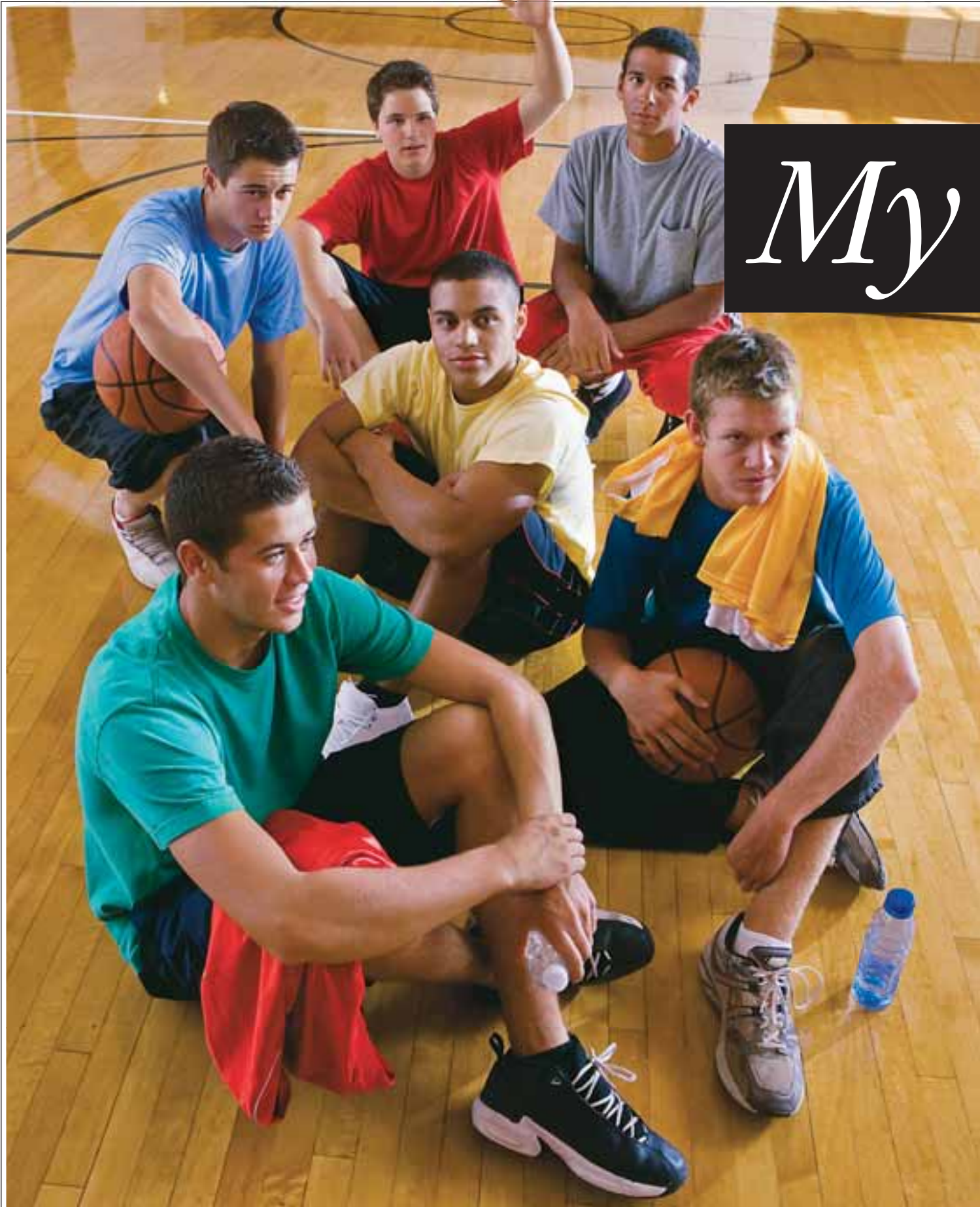
You will meet sin: Shun it.

You have the truth: Live it.

You have a testimony: Share it.¹⁰

NOTES

1. From "Come Listen to a Prophet's Voice: The Lighthouse," *Friend*, Feb. 2006, 2.
2. From "The Lighthouse of the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 96.
3. From "Whom Shall I Marry?" *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 6.
4. From "That We May Touch Heaven," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 46.
5. From "The Lighthouse of the Lord," 97.
6. From "That We May Touch Heaven," 46.
7. From "True to the Faith," *Ensign*, May 2006, 18.
8. From "That We May Touch Heaven," 47.
9. From "That We May Touch Heaven," 47.
10. From "The Lighthouse of the Lord," 97.



PERSONAL TRYOUT

BY TYLER CLARK

I thought I was trying out for basketball, but I made a much more important team.

It was the first day at my new school. My mother and I were in the office filling out papers when we heard an announcement over the speakers that basketball tryouts would be held that day after school. Since I had played on the team at my old school, I thought I'd go to the tryouts and see what happened. I knew things would be a little different moving from a school where almost everyone was a member of the Church to a school where I might be the only one. But that day I learned things would be really different.

Before school my father had given me a priesthood blessing, which helped me feel a little less worried. Then when we had family prayer, my four-year-old brother prayed that I wouldn't be scared and that I would be happy at my new school. His prayer really had an effect on me, especially because I'm more of a quiet personality and don't like drawing attention to myself. At this new school, where my religious beliefs were so unique, I knew I would get a lot of unwanted attention. I was scared and worried, and I already felt like I didn't fit in.

Basketball tryouts started with drills and shooting baskets and ended with a lot of running. I had tried my best and felt that I had a pretty good chance of making the team. Then it happened.

The coach called everyone over to give some final instructions. As we stood there tired and breathing heavily, the coach asked a question in a loud voice. "Are there any Mormon boys here who can't practice on Sundays?"

Time seemed to freeze. Did I hear him right? Instantly

my mind flashed back to the recent night when I was struggling with living in this new place. I had decided to read *For the Strength of Youth* and underline what I thought was important in each section. I knew this would help me keep the Lord's standards and help me feel closer to God. I knew the Lord would be there to help me in my time of need. I could see in my mind the section under "Sabbath Day Observance" where it says, "The Lord has given the Sabbath day for your benefit and has commanded you to keep it holy. . . . Sunday is not a holiday or a day for recreation or athletic events" (32–33).

Without hesitation I raised my hand. The coach looked at me. All the other boys looked at me. When I looked around I saw that I was the only "Mormon boy" there. What I'd been afraid of was happening. But I didn't feel embarrassed or scared. I actually felt happy inside.

Talking to my dad on the way home, I remembered my little brother's prayer; it had been answered. I was happy here. I was happy that I had passed the test and that I'd had the courage to stand up for the truth.

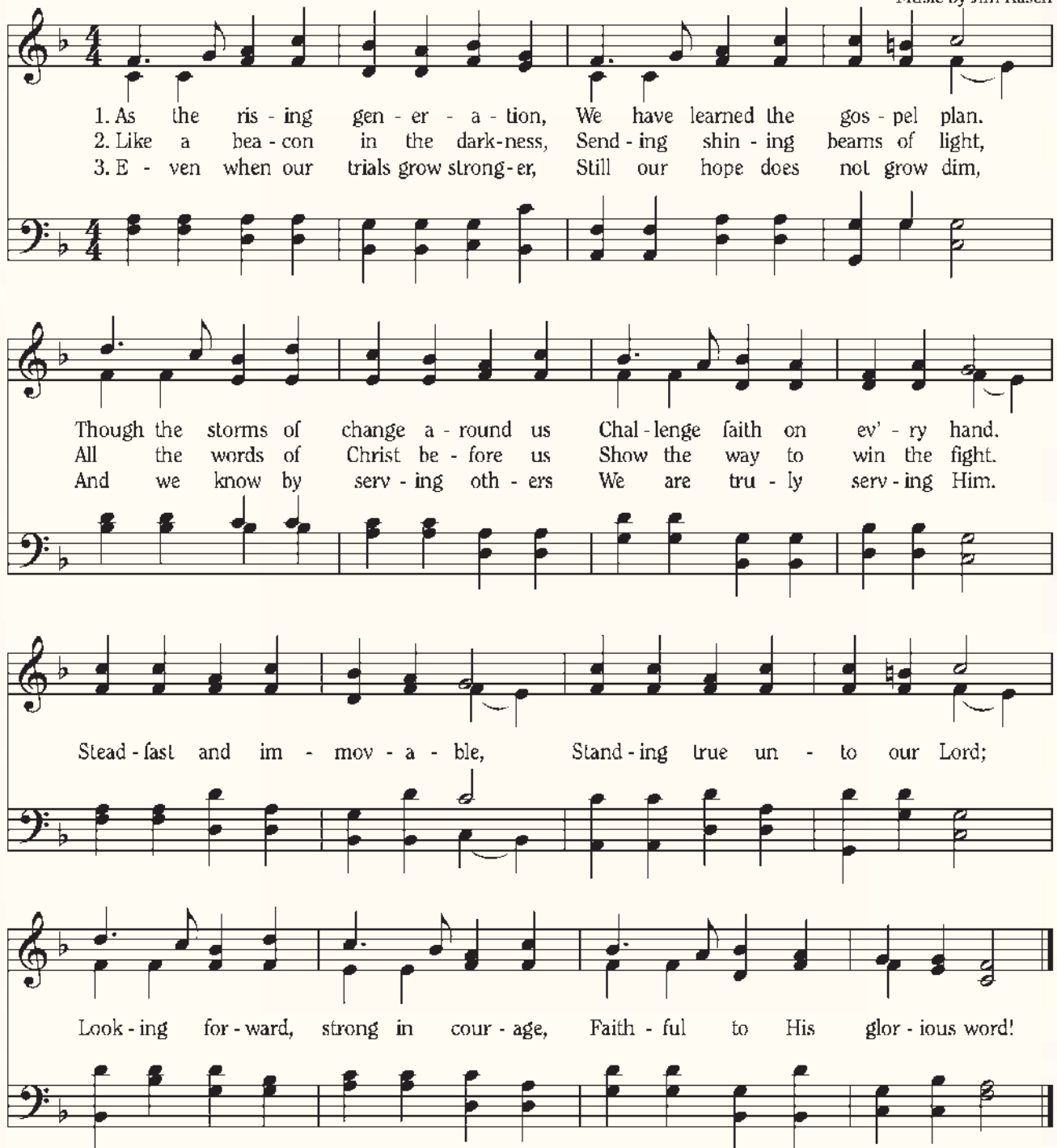
That day had been a tryout. I thought it was only for the basketball team, but it was also a tryout to see if I would stand on the Lord's side. I was so glad that I had raised my hand to show I wanted to be on His side. When the basketball roster was posted, I was surprised to see my name on it. I made the basketball team and got some good playing time during the season—even though I didn't go to the practices on Sunday. The coach and the other boys were friendly to me, and the student body would cheer my name when I was on the court. After the season ended, I found out from the missionaries that my coach was taking the missionary lessons. I am grateful for the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet. It really did give me strength that day when I had to stand for the truth alone. **NE**

STEADFAST AND IMMOVABLE

With conviction ♩ = 112 120

Words by Jan Pinborough

Music by Jim Kasen



1. As the ris - ing gen - er - a - tion, We have learned the gos - pel plan.
 2. Like a bea - con in the dark - ness, Send - ing shin - ing beams of light,
 3. E - ven when our trials grow strong - er, Still our hope does not grow dim,

Though the storms of change a - round us Chal - lenge faith on ev' - ry hand.
 All the words of Christ be - fore us Show the way to win the fight.
 And we know by serv - ing oth - ers We are tru - ly serv - ing Him.

Stead - fast and im - mov - a - ble, Stand - ing true un - to our Lord;

Look - ing for - ward, strong in cour - age, Faith - ful to His glor - ious word!

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AGENCY

Joseph Smith knew the importance of agency in God's plan.

Through the revelations he received, the Prophet Joseph Smith gained a clear understanding of Heavenly Father's plan for His children. He learned that an important part of the plan is our ability to choose between good and evil—our moral agency. Here are some of his teachings about agency.*

THE PURPOSE OF AGENCY

"We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom."

"All persons are entitled to their agency, for God has so ordained it. He has constituted mankind moral agents, and given them power to choose good or evil; to seek after that which is good, by pursuing the pathway of holiness in this life, which brings peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a fulness of joy and happiness at His right hand hereafter; or to pursue an evil course, going on in sin and rebellion against God, thereby bringing condemnation to their souls in this world, and an eternal loss in the world to come."

THE POWER OF AGENCY

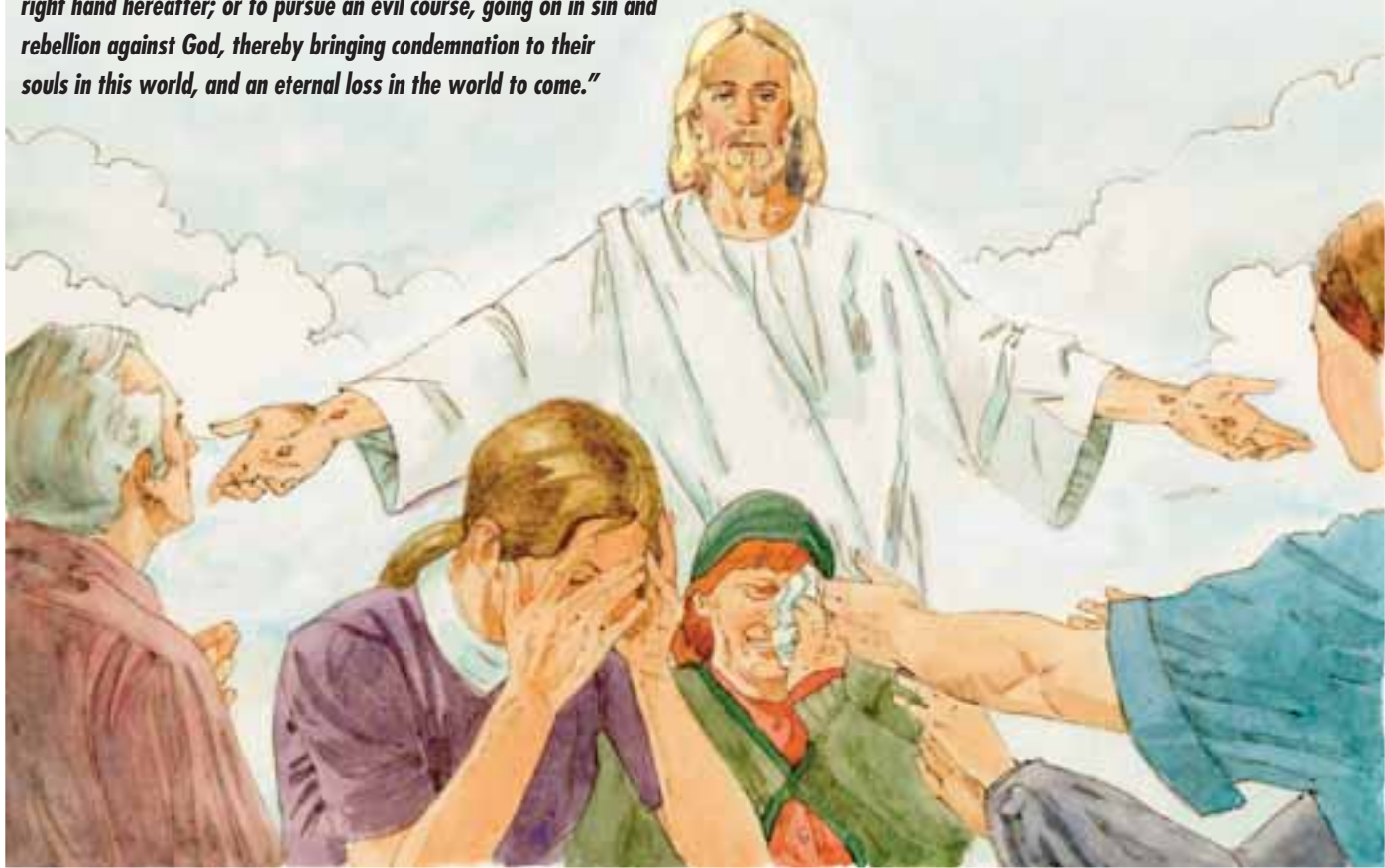
"Satan cannot seduce us by his enticements unless we in our hearts consent and yield. Our organization is such that we can resist the devil; if we were not organized so, we would not be free agents."

"The devil has no power over us only as we permit him; the moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power."

"God would not exert any compulsory means, and the devil could not."

"As well might the devil seek to dethrone Jehovah, as overthrow an innocent soul that resists everything which is evil."

* From *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211, 213–14.



THE MAN WITH ANSWERS

When Christian Monzón's friends have questions, they know they can turn to him for help.

BY DON L. SEARLE
Church Magazines

What do you do when you run into pornography? One day Christian Monzón of Asunción, Paraguay, borrowed a cell phone from a friend at school to play games on it. He discovered that the phone had pornography stored in it.

There was no doubt in Christian's mind what his friend should do about that, so Christian helped him see the need to get rid of the offensive pictures. Christian calmly explained how damaging material like that can be. He said, "If you were a father, you wouldn't want your son looking at that."

Part of what Christian told his friend came from *For the Strength of Youth*. Christian says the pamphlet helps him in every phase of his life. "I wouldn't be where I am without it," he says. He has also given copies to a couple of friends at school. They told him it gave them guidance they needed with specific problems.

Christian's classmates respect him enough that they elected him their student delegate.



Para la
**Fortaleza de la
Juventud**
Comparte, respaldas, defendes y fortaleces

Where do you find help facing the temptations of life? Christian knows that *For the Strength of Youth* offers help with many temptations that are common among his friends—drugs and drinking, for example. Few of his friends have the Internet in their homes, but they can easily get access to it—and to pornography—in Internet cafés.

Friends at school often turn to Christian and his older brother, Jimmy, for help with problems because they trust that the two Latter-day Saints will have answers. Both are respected for their beliefs by their schoolmates. Christian's classmates respect him enough that they elected him their student delegate. Among other things, this means he is their representative if they get into trouble at school.

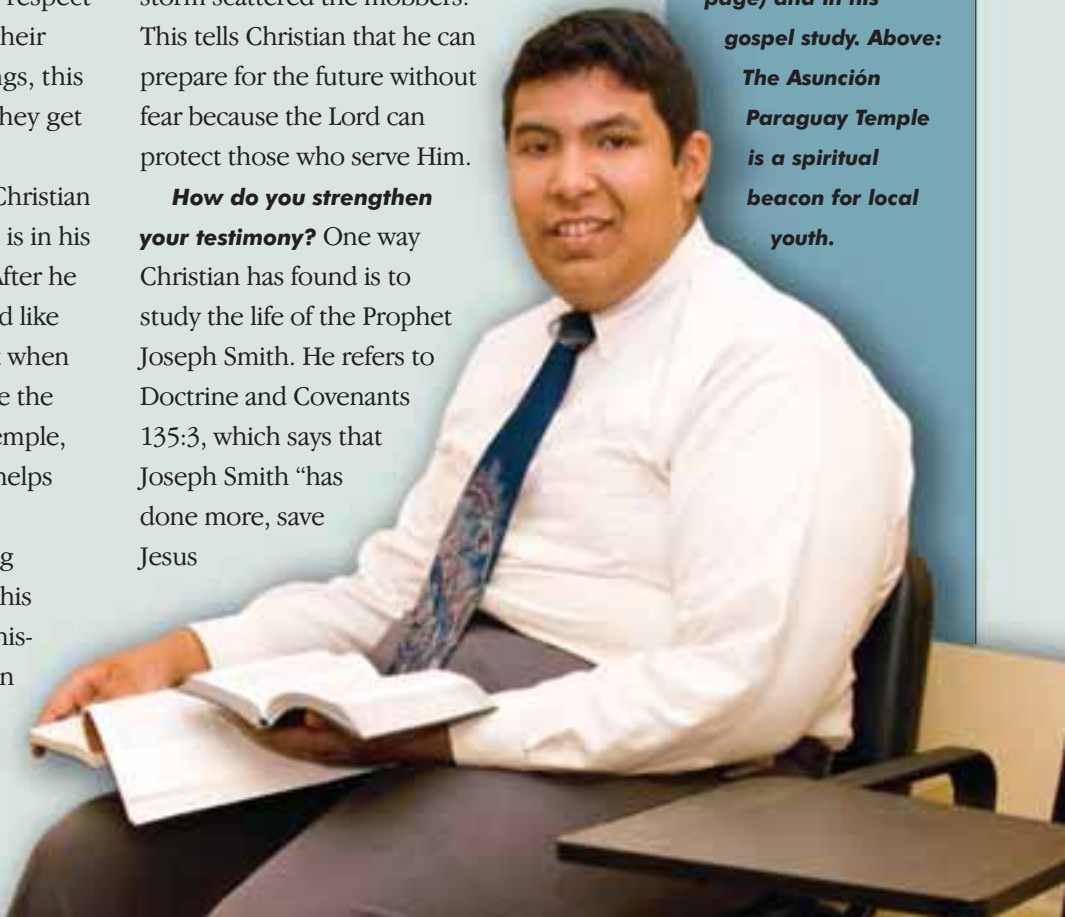
How do you plan for the future? Christian says that knowing a full-time mission is in his plans has helped him set priorities. After he finishes his secondary schooling, he'd like to study information technology. But when you know you're preparing to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, go to the temple, go on a mission, and get married, it helps you know how to prepare.

And for Christian, so does studying Church doctrine and history. In fact, his favorite stories come out of Church history. For example, he finds strength in the 1834 experience of Zion's Camp when mobbers threatened to

attack the encampment and the Prophet Joseph Smith prophesied that the Lord would not permit it. That evening, a terrible storm scattered the mobbers.¹ This tells Christian that he can prepare for the future without fear because the Lord can protect those who serve Him.

How do you strengthen your testimony? One way Christian has found is to study the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He refers to Doctrine and Covenants 135:3, which says that Joseph Smith "has done more, save Jesus

Christian Monzón is a leader among his peers at school (opposite page) and in his gospel study. Above: The Asunción Paraguay Temple is a spiritual beacon for local youth.





One of Christian's favorite Church history stories is about the young men who helped rescue survivors of the Martin handcart company in 1856 (above right). Below: Christian with his family at their stake center (from left): Jimmy (brother), Marlene (mother), Antero (father), Christian, and Rody (brother).

only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”

Christian adds, “Coming to know of Joseph Smith changed my life.”

He says that in studying Church history “you come to understand the part you can play today.” Another of his favorite stories tells of the young men who helped with the rescue of the Martin handcart company in 1856. The young men carried exhausted, starving pioneers through the freezing Sweetwater River.² Christian says he hopes he could show that kind of courage if he faced such a test.

Why is the gospel important in your life?

Christian has an answer for that question too. A priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, he

attends seminary every morning with other young people from the Cocuere Branch, Capiatá Paraguay Stake. The seminary class is in his home; his mother is the teacher.

What he has learned about our Father’s plan of salvation helped him when his beloved grandfather died suddenly. He was able to receive comfort and peace because of “the hope the gospel gives us.”

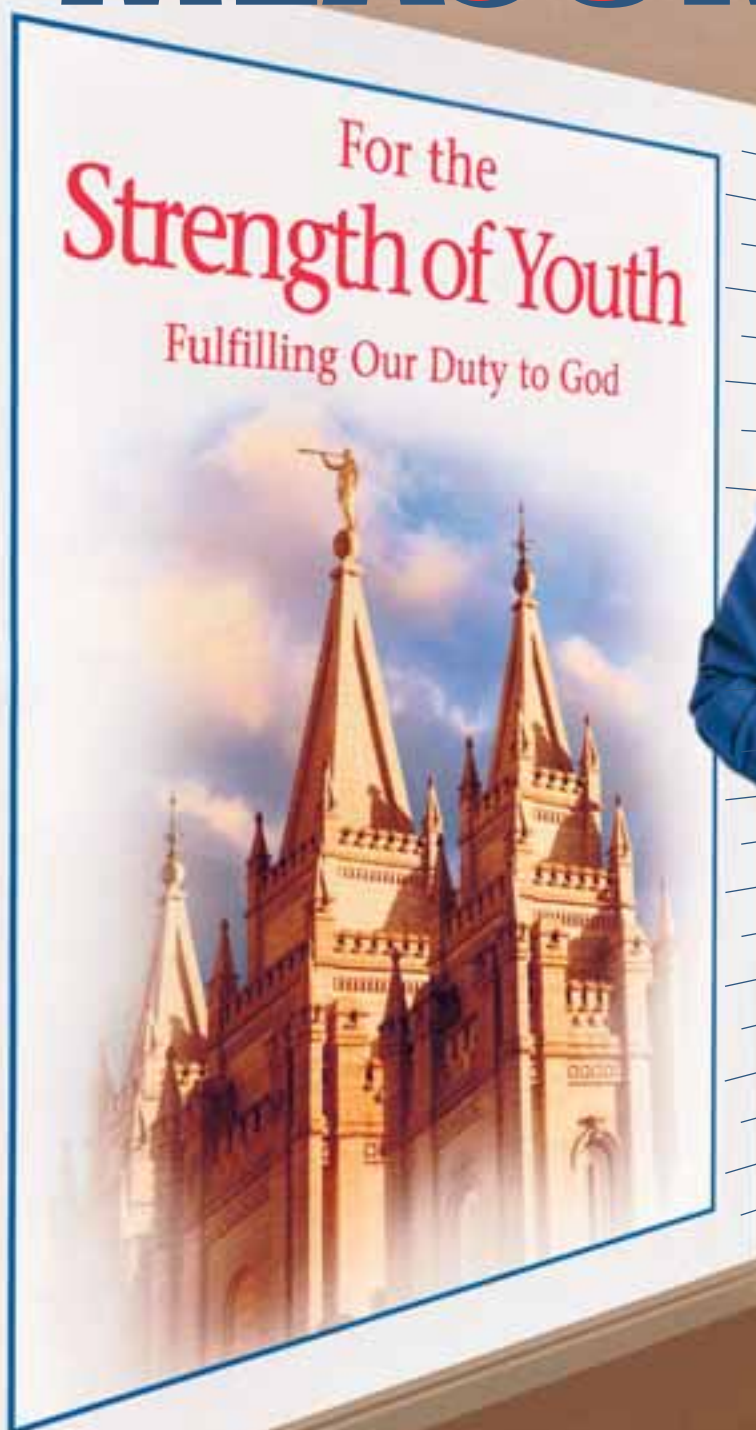
He says the gospel helps him in every part of his life. “I know the scriptures are revelation from our Father in Heaven,” he testifies. “I know this is the true Church, and I know that Jesus Christ lives.” **NE**

NOTES

1. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2004), 137.
2. See *Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3* (1995), 157.



MEASURE UP



YOU WILL NEVER OUTGROW YOUR NEED FOR STANDARDS.
(See John 14:15.)

"My friends and I have a problem with gossiping. What can I do to stop and help them stop?"

You can overcome gossiping by following the advice in *For the Strength of Youth* on overcoming swearing: "Help others around you use clean language by your example and by good-naturedly encouraging them to choose other words. Politely walk away or change the subject when others around you use bad language."

"If you have developed the habit of swearing [or gossiping], you can break it. Begin by making a decision to change. Pray for help. If you start to use words you know are wrong, keep quiet or say what you have to say in a different way."

The pamphlet also explains why it's important to speak well of others: "Speak kindly and positively about others so you can fulfill the Lord's commandment to love one another. When you use good language, you invite the Spirit to be with you" ("Language" [2001], 22–23).

Being kind in your communication is Christlike and will help you have better relationships and feel better about yourself. **NE**



The Golden Rule

Gossiping happens all around us every day, and it is extremely hurtful. It may seem cool to spread "the latest news" to your friends, but think about the person you are talking about. Would you say what you are saying if he or she was there? Did the person say you could tell people? Think about how you would feel if someone was gossiping about you. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (3 Nephi 14:12). If your friends are gossiping, nicely change the subject.

Jessica J., 16, Arizona, USA



Medicine to Cure Gossip

There are three groups involved in gossip: ourselves, those who listen, and the people we talk about. Make a commitment to stop gossiping, and then do it. Here is some medicine to cure the gossip disease: (1) Change the topic when your friends start gossiping. (2) Keep quiet so they don't have people to talk to. (3) Tell them frankly to "speak not evil one of another" (James 4:11).

But A., 22, Phnom Penh, Cambodia



Avoid Negative Comments

Gossip has destructive power and can wound people's feelings. When we gossip, we open the door for the adversary to destroy someone's reputation. To overcome this bad habit, any negative comments about someone's life should be avoided. When we hear such things, whether they are true or not, we should try to stop them. If they continue anyway, we should leave (see Matthew 12:36).

We can help our friends by counseling them never to participate in such conversations and exhort them, as members of the Church and faithful followers of Christ, always to seek to defend truth and righteousness, always to be an example and praise others (see Articles of Faith 1:13).

Ismael S., 18, São Paulo, Brazil

Think on These Things

To avoid gossiping, we can memorize a scripture like Leviticus 19:18 that teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves and recite it in our minds every time we're about to start gossiping. We can also memorize a song like "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus" (*Children's Songbook*, 78–79) and sing it in our minds. Another idea is to say two good things about the person. In that way you'll forget his or her shortcomings and instead notice the person's goodness.

Rhodora M., 19, Luzon, Philippines



Look for the Good in Others

Gossiping can be hard to overcome. But I think if you remember to love your neighbor, you might think twice before saying a regretful comment. We aren't the ones to judge others. I think looking for good things in people can help, rather than watching for the negative.

Haylee B., 15, Utah, USA

It Takes Courage

Some say that "with our mouths, we build walls between ourselves and our loved ones." I believe that in order to stop this, we need a great deal of personal and spiritual courage. If we truly understand the gospel, we as members of the Church should not gossip because God has taught us to open our mouths to proclaim the gospel to the entire world, not to criticize or gossip about others.

Vanessa R., 19, Tahiti, French Polynesia

Pray for Guidance

Remember that gossiping can have a deep, lasting impact on others. Try and put yourself in their shoes, and think about how you would feel if others were saying unkind things about you. It is a righteous desire for you to change this habit. The Lord will bless you with strength and a change of heart as you sincerely seek His guidance through prayer.

Brittney H., 12, Utah, USA

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

NEXT QUESTION

"In my family I am the youngest by many years. I always feel left out of my siblings' activities and conversations. What can I do to improve our relationship?"

Send your answer by November 15, 2008, to:

New Era, Questions & Answers 11/08

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POISONS TO THE SOUL



"Let us avoid evil speaking; let us avoid slander and gossip. These are poisons to the soul to those who

indulge. Evil speaking injures the reviler more than the reviled."

President David O. McKay (1873–1970), in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 96.



Sunday BEST

BY HILLARY HOLBROOK

We've been commanded by the Lord to keep the Sabbath day holy by resting from our labors (see Exodus 20:9–10). When you think of doing this, does a long list of things you *can't* do pop into your mind? Instead of reviewing the typical “no” list, here are suggestions for things you *can* do that are appropriate on the Sabbath. Not only can you obey the Lord's commandment, but you'll feel the Spirit from choosing the right.

Sunday dinner is a great opportunity for you and your siblings to serve your parents as you prepare for the meal. It's also a good time to catch up with each other's lives and review what was learned at church that day.

Visit other family members, such as a grandparent, aunt, or uncle. This will give you a chance to get to know your extended family members.

Read the scriptures and write in your journal to enhance your Sabbath observance and record what you learn.

Read general conference talks with family members as a reminder of what Church leaders have asked us to do in our daily lives. You can also gain a stronger testimony of the prophet's counsel.

Visit temple grounds if a temple is nearby. On a nice day it can be a peaceful experience. Take your scriptures, journal, or patriarchal blessing to reflect on its message.

Serve others, such as a sibling or parent. Make a “thinking of you” card from scratch with an encouraging message on the inside.

Review your progress in Duty to God or Personal Progress with a parent. Work on Sabbath-appropriate, spiritually-oriented goals.

Listen to good music. Recordings of hymns, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and peaceful instrumental music are a few of many wise choices. Listening to uplifting music will bring the Spirit into your heart.

Write letters to a relative or friend on a mission, missionaries who are serving from your ward, or to family members and friends you don't see often.

Make a treat, such as your favorite dessert, to share with family members.

Watch old home movies with the whole family, or look at family photos together. Not only does this provide a fun occasion for you and your family to reflect on memories, but it can provide everyone with a sense of togetherness. **NE**

18 WAYS TO **STAND STRONG**

The First Presidency introduces the counsel in *For the Strength of Youth* with the following words: “Because the Lord loves you, He has given you commandments and the words of prophets to guide you on your journey.

Some of the most important guidelines for your life are found in this pamphlet” ([2001], 2).

The teachings on the next several pages will

help you apply the standards and principles found in the pamphlet. By holding fast to these standards, you will have greater happiness in your life and be a positive example to those around you.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DILLEEN MARSH,
EXCEPT AS NOTED

For the
Strength of Youth
Fulfilling Our Duty to God



AGENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Choose righteousness and happiness, no matter what your circumstances. Take responsibility for the choices you make. Develop your abilities and talents, and use them for good. Avoid idleness and be willing to work hard.

Above the Clouds

BY CHARLES W. DAHLQUIST II
Young Men General President

Not long ago I had the opportunity to fly in a small plane. As we were preparing to board, one of the passengers asked the pilot at what altitude we would be flying. He indicated that we would be flying at 9,500 feet (2,900 m). He said, "That will get us just above the clouds." Then he explained, "If we fly below the clouds, the ride will be fairly rocky. However, if we can get through the clouds and up on top, we will have a much smoother ride."

It was a concept that proved prophetic. For us in that airplane, it took a little bit more effort, a little bit more fuel, and a little turbulence to get through the clouds. However, once we were above the turbulence, the ride was, for the most part, smooth sailing.

Although there was some brief turbulence and the need for the pilot to always be mindful of the flight conditions, the flight was much more comfortable.

Later I thought about the pilot's words: "If we can get through the clouds and up on top, we will have a much smoother ride." I thought about how much that applies to life itself. As we live in a mortal existence, there is much of the ugly and the base and the evil that we have to move above if we are to live the life of a Latter-day Saint. Then we can have the Spirit with us and feel the peace that is there for us to enjoy. It takes effort, it takes willpower, it takes courage, and it takes making correct choices for us to get above the turbulence around us. That turbulence includes the filth that surrounds us in the media. It includes discouragement, despair, and all the challenges of the

"natural man" (Mosiah 3:19).

However, if we exercise our agency appropriately, if we live the standards given to us by the First Presidency in *For the Strength of Youth*, and if we make conscious efforts day by day to rise above the things of the world, our ride in this life will be much more pleasant. We will be able to feel peace along the way, and we will be able to arrive safely at our journey's end.

It is not that the ride will be uneventful and completely peaceful. That was never promised, for there will be challenges along the way, and there will be a need for continued vigilance and alertness all along the way. However, by choosing to be on the Lord's side, we can rise above the temptations of our mortal existence, and that will guarantee us peace and happiness in this life as well as in the life to come.



GRATITUDE

Have a spirit of gratitude in all you do and say. Thank God for your blessings, and express appreciation to others who help you.

This is a wonderful time to be living here on earth. Our opportunities are limitless. While there are some things wrong in the world today, there are

many things right, such as teachers who teach, ministers who minister, marriages that make it, parents who sacrifice, and friends who help.

“We can lift ourselves, and others as well, when we refuse to remain in the realm of negative thought and cultivate within our hearts an attitude

of gratitude. If ingratitude be numbered among the serious sins, then gratitude takes its place among the noblest of virtues. . . .



“ . . . Let us reflect gratitude for our *Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*. His glorious gospel provides answers to life’s greatest questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where does my spirit go when I die?”

President Thomas S. Monson, “An Attitude of Gratitude,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 54, 60.

EDUCATION

Prepare to be an influence for good in the world. Obtain an education, and be enthusiastic about learning. Attend seminary.

Plans for the Future

BY MÔNICA SANTOS DE OLIVEIRA

I returned from the mission field with many hopes regarding employment. Even though I had worked before, I had no qualifications, so I did what I could to find work, but I was never satisfied and could not see any progress in my future.

I always wanted to study, but I could not pay for schooling, and my family was not in a position to help me.

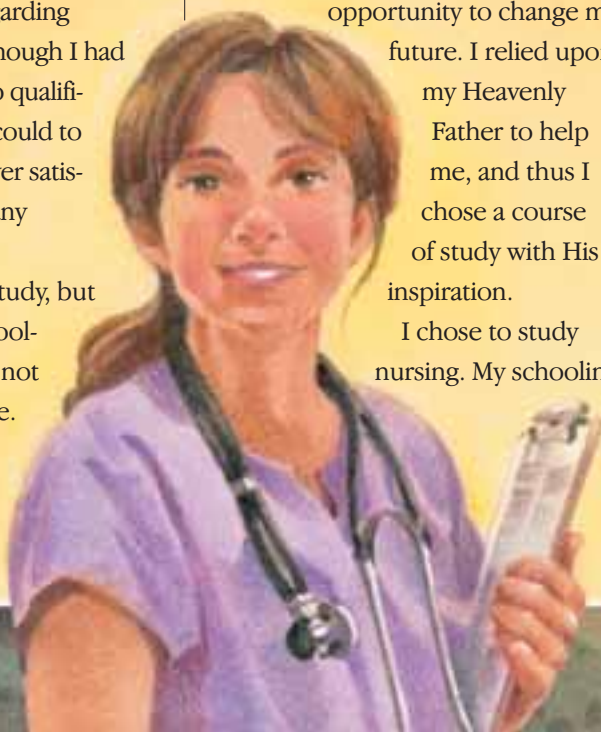
When the Perpetual

Education Fund was started, I saw an opportunity to change my future. I relied upon my Heavenly Father to help me, and thus I chose a course of study with His inspiration.

I chose to study nursing. My schooling

required a lot of study and dedication. But I became impassioned with nursing. Three months after graduating, I was able to find employment at one of the best hospitals in Alagoas, Brazil.

I have many plans for the future. I plan to take advanced studies in nursing, and I have started to pay back my loan so others can partake of the opportunity of receiving an education and the blessings that come with it.



FAMILY

Do your part to build a happy home. Honor your parents, and strengthen your relationships with your brothers and sisters.

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have declared: “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”¹

Interestingly, these simple truths, founded on our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness, are sometimes surprising to the world. But a recent study found that teens outside the Church are also finding happiness in spirituality and in their family relationships. In 2007 two large U.S. media organizations surveyed young people ages 12 to 24 to find what makes them happy.

The study presented these findings, among others:



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND

- Youth “depend on parents as a vital source of security and happiness.”
- “Youth will increasingly seek happiness via spirituality and faith.”
- “A resurgence of interest among youth in traditional family structures will gain momentum.”

One of the summary statements from the study said, “While our initial research did find that today’s youth are more traditional than previous generations, we were surprised to find the extent to which youth anticipate their own marriages and families with great joy.”²

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. See Associated Press/MTV Research and Strategic Insights, *Happiness*, Aug. 20, 2007.

FRIENDS

Choose friends who share your high standards. Treat everyone with kindness and respect. Invite friends of other faiths to Church activities. Reach out to new converts and those who are less active.

It Could Have Been Me NAME WITHHELD

When I was seven, a girl moved into my neighborhood, and we became friends. We both liked the same things, and we were a good influence on each other. We made good choices because our parents had taught us to choose wisely.

Once we got into sixth grade though, we made wrong choices in order to fit in with our friends who had lower standards. The next year, I decided that I needed to change friends so I could start making right choices again by living higher standards. The only problem was that my friend and I were still friends, and I didn’t want to stop hanging out with her.



Doing what I needed to do was hard. I had been told all my life to pick good friends and keep my standards high. But I did not have a testimony of why this was important, so I had to trust that it was correct. Over the summer and during eighth grade, we stopped hanging out as much and chose separate directions.

I saw the blessings of this decision later that year. My former friends decided to bring alcohol to school. They convinced some other girls to drink it, and they all got in trouble. I realized that one of those girls could have been me. If I had been with them, I don't know if I would have had the strength to stand up for my beliefs.

When I think of the consequences I would have had to face, I feel overwhelmed. I could have struggled with addiction, been in trouble with the law, lost my parents' trust, but most of all, I could have betrayed the trust Heavenly Father has in me.

I know that what the prophet says about living high standards is for our protection. Even though we may see it as inconvenient, it helps us spiritually, physically, mentally, and in other ways we don't even realize.



DRESS AND APPEARANCE

Dress modestly to show respect for God and yourself. Never lower your dress standards for any occasion. Do not disfigure your body with tattoos and body piercings.

The Shopping Trip

BY REBECCA RICHTER

My mom and I were shopping when I found a black skirt I just had to have. I tried on the skirt and came out to show my mom. She hesitated before saying, "Becky, I think it's a little on the short side." I replied that I didn't think so and reassured her that all the girls at school were wearing similar styles—some a lot shorter. I tried for several minutes to persuade her to like the skirt.

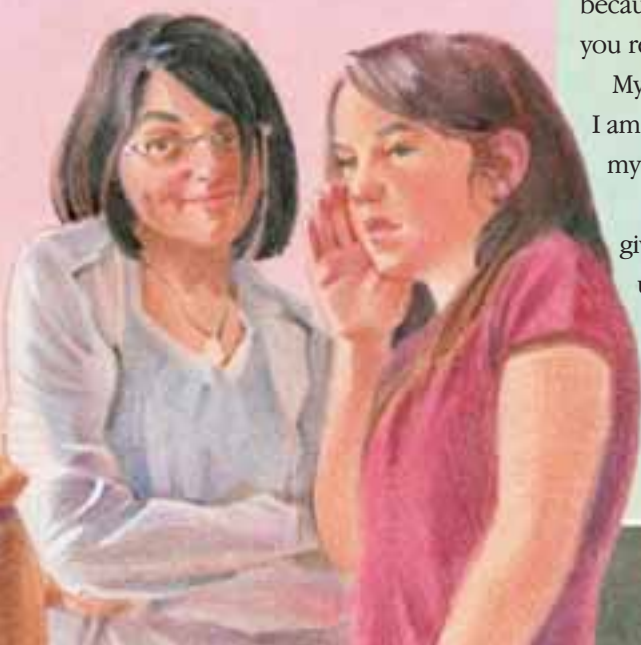
My mom finally said firmly, "It's too short. We're not getting it. Go change."

I didn't understand why she was being so strict with me, especially when I felt like I was old enough to decide for myself what I could wear. Our shopping trip was ruined, and we drove home in silence.

Finally, my mom spoke: "Becky, the reason I didn't let you get the skirt is because it didn't look like you. That skirt was too short and didn't reflect who you really are. You're a daughter of God."

My mom's explanation taught me a principle that I will always remember. I am a daughter of God, and everything I do and wear reflects what I think of myself and how I feel about my Heavenly Father and my Savior.

Dressing modestly is a constant struggle, but I'm grateful that I didn't give in and compromise my standards. I know that if we can come to truly understand that we are children of God, we will overcome our desires to dress like the world.





ENTERTAINMENT AND THE MEDIA

Choose uplifting entertainment. Avoid anything that is vulgar, immoral, violent, or pornographic in any way. Commit to keeping God's standards.

With so many types of entertainment all around us, the choices can be overwhelming. Here are some guidelines to help us choose uplifting entertainment:

1. Before playing a video game or seeing a movie, research its rating and content.
2. Ask yourself if there is unsuitable material in the game or movie, regardless of the rating. Avoid

anything that drives away the Spirit.

3. If the material is inappropriate, it's perfectly OK to walk out, turn it off, or put it down.
4. Look for edifying games, movies, and music that are also mentally stimulating.
5. Discover the world away from television, cell phones, and computers, such as hiking, biking, learning a new skill, or learning about other cultures.

6. Enjoy activities that keep your mind active and your body physically fit.

What are God's standards that can guide in choosing media? "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

MUSIC AND DANCING

Listen to music that helps you draw closer to Heavenly Father. Do not listen to music that encourages immorality, glorifies violence, or uses offensive language. When dancing, avoid full body contact or suggestive movements.

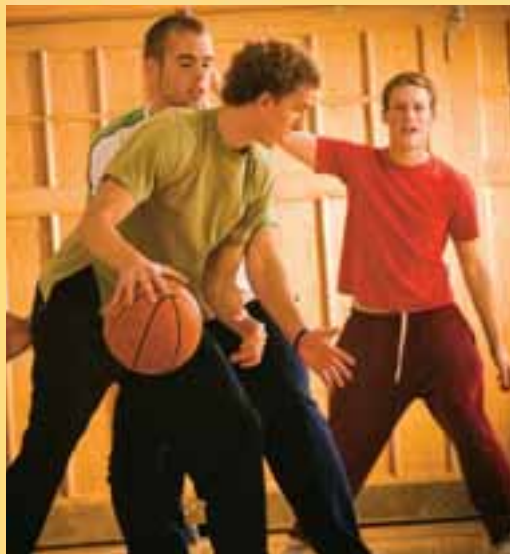
Young people, you cannot afford to fill your minds with the unworthy music of our day. It is not harmless. It can welcome onto the stage of your mind unworthy thoughts and set a tempo to which they dance and to which you may act. You degrade yourself when you identify with those things that at times surround extremes in

music—the shabbiness, the irreverence, the immorality, the addictions. Such music is not worthy of you.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Worthy Music, Worthy Thoughts,” *New Era*, Apr. 2008, 9.

Visit www.lds.org/churchmusic to listen to hymns, download songs, or learn more about music.





LANGUAGE

Use language that uplifts, encourages, and compliments others. Use the names of God and Jesus Christ with reverence and respect. Do not use profane, vulgar, or crude language or gestures.

Conversation is the substance of friendly social activity. It can be happy. It can be light. It can be earnest. It can be funny. But it must not be salty, or uncouth, or foul if one is in sincerity a believer in Christ. . . .

"[Anyone] who must resort to such language immediately says that he is poverty-ridden in his vocabulary. He does not enjoy sufficient richness of expression to be able to speak effectively without swearing or using foul words. . . .

"Don't swear. Don't profane. Avoid so-called dirty jokes. Stay away from conversation that is sprinkled with foul and filthy words. You will be happier if you do so, and your example will give strength to others."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Take Not the Name of God in Vain," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 48.

DATING

Do not date until you are at least 16 years old. Date only those who have high standards. When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. Plan activities that help you remain close to the Spirit of the Lord.

The best group dates are planned yet casual, inexpensive yet fun. Be creative; people enjoy something that offers variety and allows them to get to know others while having a good time. Ask your parents, friends, or youth leaders for ideas for group dates. Here are just a few to get you started:

- Take a tour of a local candy factory, cheese factory, or other local spot of interest.
- Organize a potluck dinner, and assign people to bring certain dishes or ingredients.
- Visit a local park, where you can feed the birds, take a walk, throw a Frisbee, ride bikes, or have a picnic.
- Visit a museum, aquarium, or zoo. Check the newspaper or Internet for free or discounted tickets.
- Have a service date. Rake a neighbor's leaves, wash windows, or help with something that needs to be done.
- If you're in the mood for a quieter evening, visit a local library or bookstore and browse through books together.
- If you live in a region with a lot of snow, build an elaborate snowman together. If you live near a beach, build a sandcastle. Or build separate ones, and have a competition judged by strangers who pass by.



"Let me guess. First date?"



TOP LEFT: ILLUSTRATION BY CARY HENRIE; LEFT: ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT GREER; ABOVE: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW REIER; TOP RIGHT: ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN STOKER

SEXUAL PURITY

Keep yourself sexually pure. Do not have any sexual relations before marriage.

Do not participate in talk or activities that arouse sexual feelings. Do not participate in homosexual activities.

Seek help if you become a victim of rape, incest, or other sexual abuse.

In matters of human intimacy, *you must wait!* You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are legally and lawfully married. If you persist in pursuing physical satisfaction without the sanction of heaven, you run the terrible risk of

such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine *both* your longing for physical intimacy *and* your ability to give wholehearted devotion to a later, truer love. You may discover to your horror that what you should have saved you have spent and that only God's grace can

recover the virtue you so casually gave away. On your wedding day the very best gift you can give your eternal companion is your very best self—clean and pure and worthy of such purity in return.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Personal Purity,” *New Era*, Feb. 2000, 6.





REPENTANCE

Through the Savior's Atonement, you can receive forgiveness and be cleansed from your sins when you repent. Confess your sins to the Lord and to those you have wronged. If the sins are serious, you also need to confess them to your bishop.

Our sincere desire should be to have both clean hands *and* a pure heart—both a remission of sins from day to day *and* to walk guiltless before God. Clean hands alone will not be enough when we stand before Him who is pure and who, as ‘a lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1 Peter 1:19), freely spilled His precious blood for us.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Clean Hands and a Pure Heart,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 82.

HONESTY

Be honest with yourself, others, and the Lord. Do not rationalize that dishonesty is right.

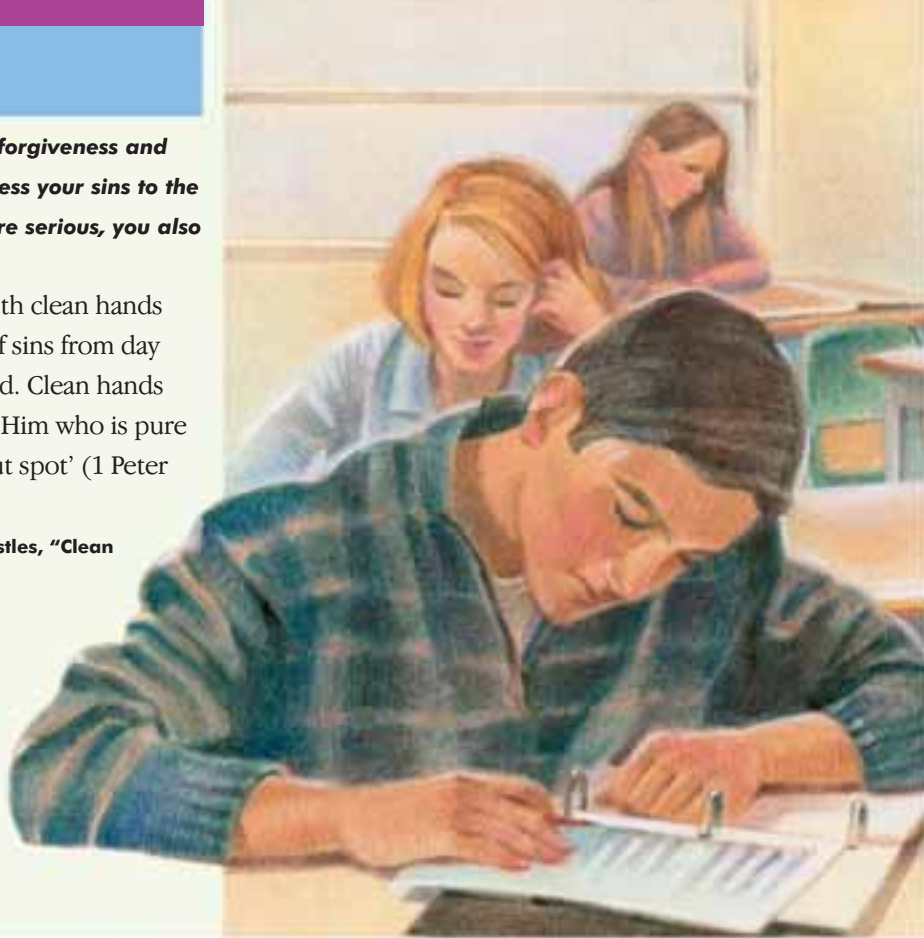
Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving. . . .

“Cheating in school is a form of self-deception. We go to school to learn. We cheat ourselves when we coast on the efforts and scholarship of someone else. . . .

“Stealing is all too common throughout the world. . . . Stealing takes many forms, including shoplifting; taking cars, stereos, CD players, video games, and other items that belong to someone else; stealing time, money, and merchandise from employers; . . . or borrowing without any intention of repayment. No one has ever gained anything of value by theft. . . .

“The stealing of anything is unworthy of a priesthood holder.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Honesty—a Moral Compass,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 41–42, 43.



SABBATH DAY OBSERVANCE

Use the Sabbath to worship the Lord, attend church, draw closer to your family, and help others. Do not seek entertainment or spend money on the Sabbath. When possible, avoid working on Sunday.

Where Should I Be?

BY EMMA WITHERS

Do you ever have those Sundays where you just don't feel like going to church? Well I have, especially recently. I've just moved into a new ward in Cape Town, South Africa. It's not that the people in the ward aren't nice or friendly. They just aren't my friends from home.

After my first week in the ward I had made up my mind—from now on I was only going to sacrament meeting. The following week I went late. As I walked through the chapel doors, I was greeted by few people and took my seat. As I sat there, I felt so homesick. All I wanted was my old ward, the friendly faces that knew me.

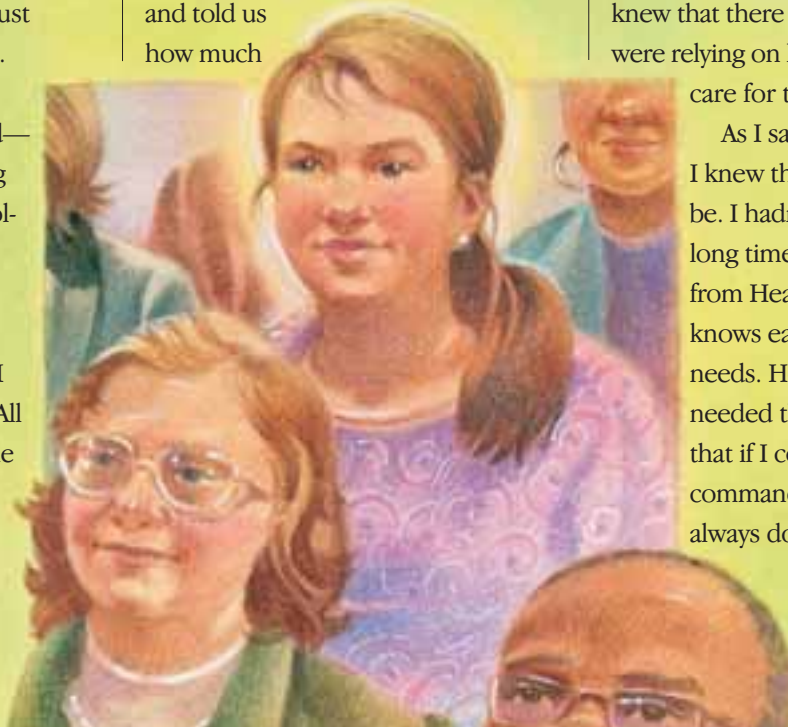
Then the first speaker got up and began her talk. It was

like she was speaking to me. She spoke of feeling alone in a new city, and I realized I was not the only one. Then the second speaker shared another message which held personal significance to me. Just before the meeting ended, the bishop stood up and told us how much

Committing to attend your Church meetings is a most significant decision in your efforts to keep the Sabbath day holy.

he loved each one of us. He said he knew that there were people who were relying on him to look after and care for them.

As I sang the closing hymn, I knew this was where I should be. I hadn't felt such peace in a long time, and I knew it came from Heavenly Father. He knows each of us and our needs. He gave me what I needed that day, and I know that if I continue to live His commandments, He will always do so.



A SIGN OF COMMITMENT TO THE LORD



Ezekiel 20:12, 19–20]. . .

"When I was [young], I wondered just what activities were appropriate for the Sabbath. I read lists of do's and don'ts, all compiled by others. But now I have a much better understanding, which I gained from two Old Testament scriptures [see Exodus 31:12–13;

"Pondering these scriptures has helped me to understand. My behavior on the Sabbath constitutes my sign to the Lord of my regard for him and for my covenants with him. . . . I have concluded that our activities on the Sabbath will be appropriate when we honestly consider them to be our personal sign of our commitment to the Lord."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Reflection and Resolution," in Brigham Young University 1989–90 Speeches (1990), 6.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Willingly pay a full tithe. Attend tithing settlement. Obey the law of the fast.

I'd Rather Be Blessed!

BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

In Guyana, a country located in the northern part of South America, Latter-day Saint teens are talking about tithes and offerings.

"I'd rather be blessed!" says Simeon Lovell, 14, during a seminary lesson at the Prashad Nagar meetinghouse in Georgetown. The class has just read Malachi 3:8–12, which warns that those who rob God by not paying tithing will be cursed but promises that those who do pay tithing will have blessings so great they can't be measured.

"Look at all that is promised," says classmate Xiann Kippins, 16. "You will be protected. You will prosper. The windows of heaven will be opened to you."

Clint Callender, 17, of the



Garden Park Second Branch (also in Georgetown), says, "Everything on earth is from Heavenly Father. He asks for only a little portion of it back, to help us show our gratitude. So I am happy to pay tithing. I am happy to fast once a month and donate to provide for the poor.

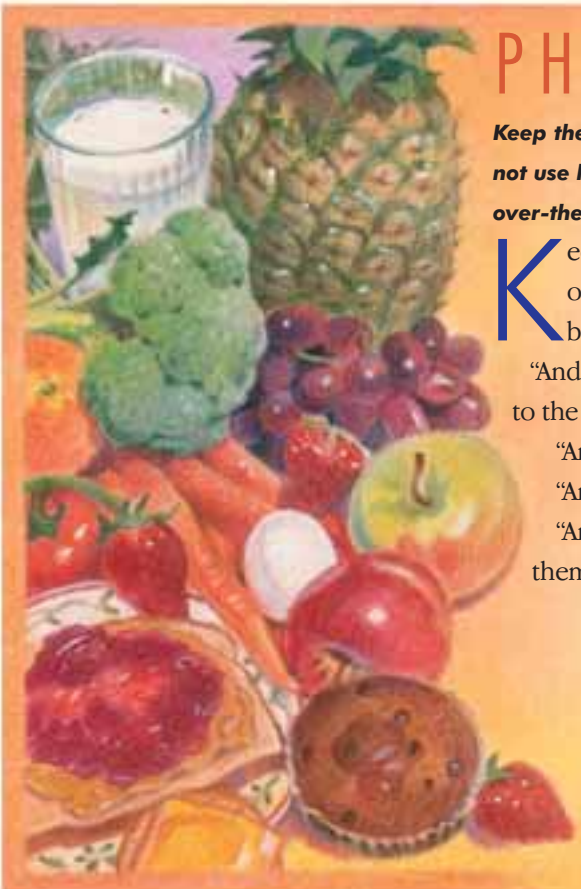
And when I see all the Church does when there is a tsunami, hurricane, or other disaster—all the clothing and food

supplies provided by the Church—it makes me happy to think I can be part of that by being generous with my offerings."

Elsewhere in the West Indies Mission, 17-year-old Curfew Ali of the Arima Branch in Port of Spain, Trinidad, explains to Mark Mangray, also 17, that even though she earns only a little money, she pays 10 percent of her increase as tithing and contributes to fast offerings too. "That way, I know the Lord is free to bless me," she says. She talks to Mark about tithing settlement and how great it feels to be able to declare that she has paid a full tithing.

Mark looks at a blank donation slip, reads it, and says, "You're right, Curfew. I'm bringing my tithing to church tomorrow."





PHYSICAL HEALTH

Keep the Word of Wisdom. Eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. Do not use hard drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, or tobacco products. Do not abuse prescription or over-the-counter medications.

Keeping your body healthy will help you handle the stresses of life. When we obey the Word of Wisdom, Heavenly Father has promised us wonderful blessings:

“And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

“And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them” (D&C 89:18–21).

You know the don'ts of the Word of Wisdom, but do you know the do's? Read Doctrine and Covenants 89:10–17 to find out.

SERVICE TO OTHERS

Serve others in your Church assignments and in your home, school, and community. Seek daily the guidance of the Holy Ghost to know whom to serve and how to help meet their needs.

King Benjamin taught, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). There are many ways to serve others, but sincerity and love are the key. Here are some other tips and suggestions on how to serve:

1. Don't forget that service to your family comes first.
2. Make your service fit individual

needs. Think about what someone might like, want, or need.

3. Keep service activities simple, and include others in planning and carrying them out.

4. A smile, a cheerful attitude, a listening ear, sincere praise, and quiet acts of kindness are important forms of service.

5. Remember and apply the counsel given in Mosiah 4:21. Share generously with others.



GO FORWARD WITH FAITH

Be true to the Lord and to His Church. Regularly pray in private and read the scriptures. Keep your covenants and listen to the whisperings of the Spirit. The Lord will help you meet your trials and challenges.

The World Is Looking to You

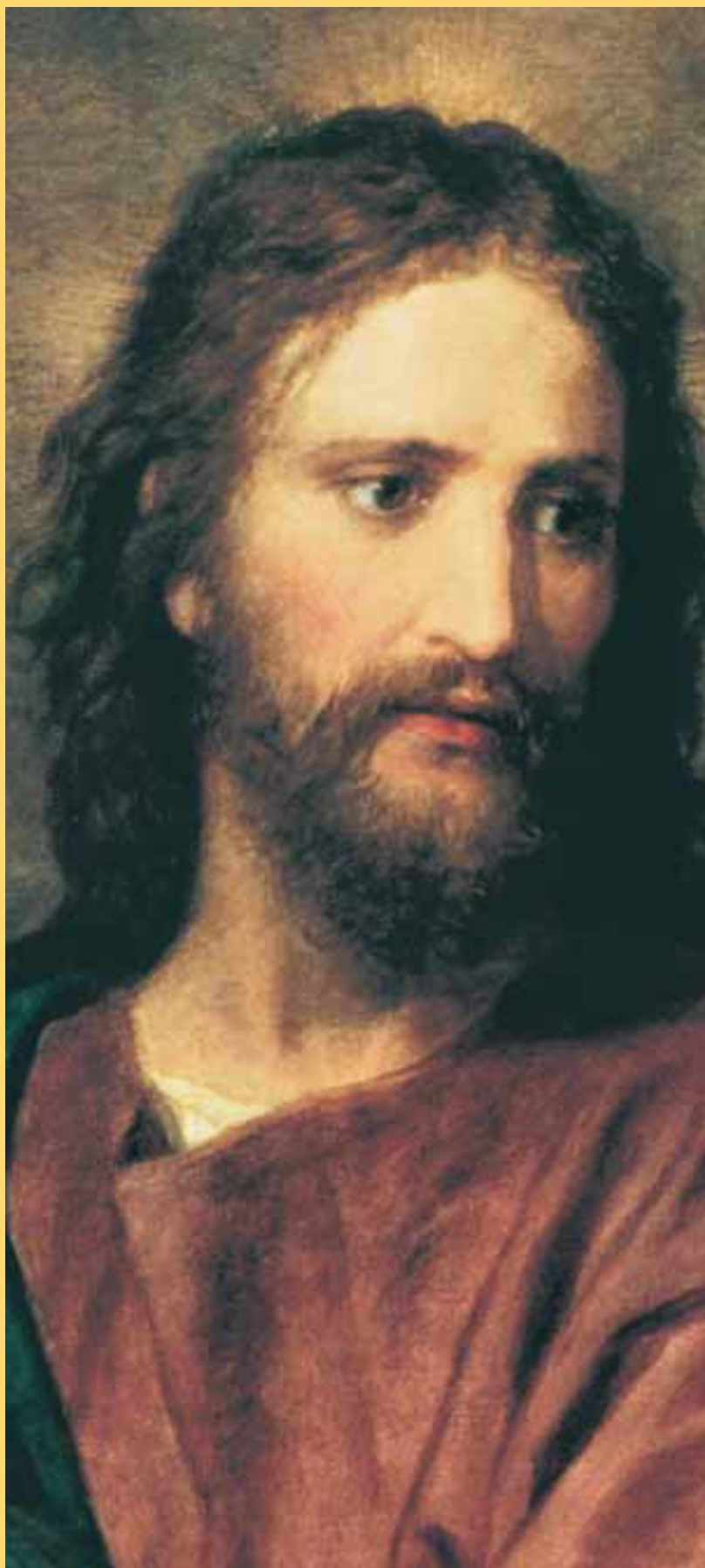
BY THE YOUNG WOMEN GENERAL PRESIDENCY

Now is the time to go forward with faith. It is the time to be found keeping the commandments of God. It is the time to exercise your faith by being prayerful and obedient. As you exercise your faith by following these standards with exactness, you will find that you will be happy and have more opportunities to share the gospel and your beliefs with others. Living these standards will give you freedom, not restrict you.

As you go forward with faith, you will reap the promised blessings and the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon you. With His Spirit to guide you, you will know what to do and how to respond in every circumstance, and you will be keeping your baptismal covenant to always remember Him.

Youthful leaders in all ages have been asked to exercise their faith and to obey with exactness. Nephi, Joseph Smith, Ruth, and many others have acted with faith as they have been obedient to the Lord and His prophets.

You are the youth of the noble birthright, a royal generation, and a generation of destiny. Your faith will make all the difference in a world that is looking for goodness and light. The world is looking to you for example and leadership. Therefore, “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). **NE**



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BE WARY OF WOODEN HORSES



Why do we have high standards for Church activities? So that inappropriate influences do not injure us from within.

BY ELDER KENNETH JOHNSON
Of the Seventy

Have you noticed how our surroundings can influence our actions and affect our behavior?

I recall, as a young college student, participating in a discussion with an instructor who made reference to research concerning the effects of environment on productivity in the workplace. He reported that some environments encouraged employees to work with greater energy and industry while other environments had an adverse effect. The thought that these seemingly simple things could have such an influence was of great interest to me.

He also spoke of an experiment conducted with a group of people sitting at a table ready to enjoy the meal that had been placed before them. Though each of the participants was hungry and expressed a desire to eat the food, their appetites were affected dramatically by changing the lighting in the room. Following a change in the lighting, many did not eat at all, others ate very little, and, surprisingly, none of the participants enjoyed the meal.

To think that appetizing food would lose its appeal simply because the room lighting

had changed indicates the possible impact and influence of the environment on our behavior.

Many years later, in pursuit of my business career, I was invited by a client to provide insurance coverage for a new venture he was launching. When I arrived at the location, I learned that it was to be a nightclub.

As we passed through reception, entering the main area, I was impressed by the decor. The furnishings and fittings, curtains and carpeting were well coordinated, providing a most pleasing setting. This was not what I had expected to find after having been told the purpose for which the venue was to be used. As I sat with the proprietor, noting the necessary information, an employee approached and asked if he could test the systems.

My client gave his approval. Suddenly the serene setting was transformed as the room lighting faded to be replaced by flashing lights of multiple colors and excessively loud music. The scene of tranquility was immediately shattered.

It was impossible to communicate under such circumstances, so we walked back to the reception area. Following further



Let us plan and participate in wholesome activities by raising the bar and pushing back the world. Through raising the standard we will enjoy lasting memories, consistent with the promise of the great plan of happiness.

discussion and because of what I had experienced, I did not feel comfortable to proceed, so I referred my client to a specialist in this field of insurance. To this day I vividly recall the dramatic transformation that occurred with shafts of light and the pulsating beat of loud music penetrating the darkened room.

I learned a lasting lesson from these experiences. Our surroundings can have a significant impact on how we feel and the way we behave.

This is one reason our leaders have counseled that every Church-sponsored activity should be held in an environment where the Spirit of the Lord can be present. Think about this counsel. Now think about our Church activities. What can we do to fulfill the Lord's purpose with regard to wholesome and uplifting Church activities?

The Trojan Horse

Since my youth I have been intrigued with the Greek legend of the Trojan horse. You will probably recall that the Grecian army had besieged the city of Troy for 10 years without being able to breach the impenetrable fortifications.

Eventually the Greeks pretended to withdraw, leaving behind them a large wooden horse with a raiding party concealed inside. The Trojans believed the horse to be a good omen and, against the advice of

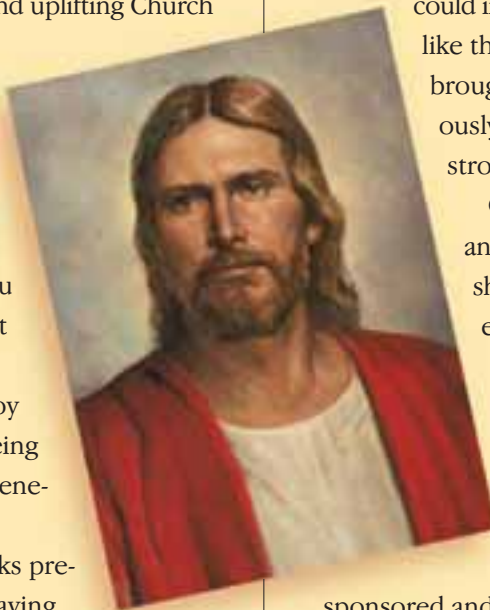
some, brought it within the city walls. During the night the Grecian warriors emerged from their hiding place and opened the city gates, allowing the Grecian army to enter and conquer Troy.

We also must be on guard against forces that are conspiring to breach our defenses with the intent to destroy our shield of faith! Our homes and places of worship can provide a refuge from the storm caused by elements of inappropriate worldliness, enabling us to "be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works" (Mosiah 5:15) and to always "stand in holy places" (D&C 45:32).

Failing to be on guard may cause some to lose spiritual sensitivity as they tolerate unwholesome music and inappropriate activities. Allowing such things could injure us from within, like the wooden horse being brought into what had previously been an invincible stronghold.

Our objective in planning and preparing activities should not be to imitate or emulate the fashions of the world but to provide an environment where the Spirit of the Lord can abide. This applies whenever or wherever an activity is Church

sponsored and should be our guide when choosing what movies to watch, computer programs to browse, or other leisure pursuits to engage in. We should give particular consideration to events involving





the use of Church buildings, as they are dedicated and set apart for activities that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

If the Savior were to attend an activity at a Church meetinghouse, would His response be comparable to when He cast the money changers out of the temple at Jerusalem (see Matthew 21:12–13)? Or would He, like Peter at the Mount of Transfiguration, express the sentiment: “It is good for us to be here” (Matthew 17:4)?

President Gordon B. Hinckley’s (1910–2008) counsel concerning qualifications for full-time missionary service applies to this topic: “I am confident that raising the bar on eligibility will cause our young people, particularly our young men, to practice self-discipline, to live above the

low standards of the world, to avoid transgression and take the high road in all their activities.”¹

With these words in mind, let each of us determine to plan and participate in wholesome activities by raising the bar and pushing back the world.

Will this approach restrict the enjoyment in and eliminate expressions of happiness from our social gatherings? Not at all! In fact, the opposite will be true. Through raising the standard we will enjoy experiences that cultivate lasting memories, consistent with the promise of the great plan of happiness. **NE**

NOTE

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Missionary Service,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 17.





Talking about **STANDARDS**

BY JANET THOMAS
Church Magazines

*These teens from New Hampshire have several
standard answers to the questions they get.*



Every day at lunch, a kid at Caleb Earnshaw's school asks him, "So Caleb, when are you going to have sex?"

And every day, 15-year-old Caleb gives the same answer, "Not until I'm married."

The next question is always, "Why?"

And it is the answer to this question that attracts the crowd. Caleb says, "I look at it as an opportunity. Every day, people gather around for the conversation, all these people sitting around us, listening intently. Every day I tell him about God's plan for marriage. I've told him that way you never have regrets, but he just doesn't understand how I can make that choice. I write to my friends who are on their missions and ask them what to say."

Caleb, who lives in the Concord New Hampshire Stake, is like most of the teens in his stake who must regularly defend the choices they have made to live gospel standards.

At least for Caleb, one thing has made his situation easier. There are older Mormon kids who have established a good reputation in the school. "We've had some others go before us, like Tyler Cook. He has three older brothers, and they are great examples. Everybody knew them. They kept their standards, and it makes it so much easier for us to keep ours. If I say I'm Mormon, people will say, 'Oh you're like the Cooks.' Or they name off some of the older Mormon kids. They are all on missions now, but they made our lives easier by how they chose to behave in high school."

Strong Defense

Having to defend their choices to live gospel standards is a regular part of school life for the teens in the Concord New Hampshire Stake. Many are just one of a few members in

their schools. Some of the standards outlined in *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet are easy to defend, while others end up being hard to talk about with friends.

The girls overwhelmingly found modesty to be one standard that they had little trouble defending. Jessica Payne, 17, of the Laconia Ward, says, "Modesty is easy. I do sports, but I'm the goalie, and I wouldn't wear tank tops anyway. It has never been a subject I have to talk about with my friends. They like to wear long pants or long shorts. We're used to dressing that way."

"Modesty and no drinking are easy to explain, and people understand. But language is tough," said Arica Chatterley, 16, of the Manchester Ward.

But for Sarah Ayer, 16, of the Laconia Ward, the subject of drinking has become a sticking point with some classmates. "Someone in my chemistry class asked me what would happen if I drank.

"They asked, 'Would your parents disown you?'

" 'No, they wouldn't do that,' I answered.

" 'Then why don't you just try?'

" 'First of all, it's bad for you. God gave us the Word of Wisdom, so we can know what is good and bad.'

" 'Would you go to hell if you were swearing and drinking?'

Sarah stopped for moment in her story and shook her head. "It's weird how extreme some people get. I had to explain about repentance."

Then Sarah said something that truly answered her classmates' questions about standards. "Living them daily makes it easy to continue to live them."

Caleb Earnshaw and Shelby Finlayson (far left) were accidentally color coordinated when they met with the rest of the Concord New Hampshire youth for a Saturday activity. Other teens from the stake also posed for photos.





Why Wait to Date?

It seems like one of the most difficult standards for these teens to convince their friends of is waiting to date until they are 16.

Jared Grain, 17, of the Bedford Ward said that it was tough before he turned 16. He was always being asked why he couldn't go out. "My whole school got excited about me turning 16 and were putting up posters announcing my birthday."

Elena Halley, 17, of the Ascutney Ward said she had to explain it a little differently. "They don't get that we're young. We have a very long time to date and get to know somebody we can consider marrying. I've seen a lot of couples who have dated too young end up sadly."

By extension, the standard that goes with dating is maintaining purity. Josh Savage, 15, of the Ascutney Ward said, "No one gets it. Everyone asks me why. I have that conversation all the time, and they will relentlessly bug you. My friends at school have no intention of waiting until marriage. I have to talk about it all the time."

"It's definitely easier to be around guys from the Church. You have none of that pressure. You can just relax and talk about other things. They don't try to use your standards against you."

Watch It!

Two other standards that cause a lot of discussion are not drinking and not using profanity. Mitchell Mender, 17, of the Lebanon Ward says, "My friends just can't understand why I don't want to have any 'fun.' A lot of times I tell them that I like

being able to remember what I do. I see that a lot of them get into trouble. I tell them I don't want to ruin my life like that. They know me and that I'm not going to give in. Others are a little surprised that I'm not going to give in."

Seth Sansoucie, 15, of the Canterbury Ward says that it seems like everybody in his school swears. "Some ask why I don't swear. I say it's against my religion. My friends don't swear a lot, but every once in awhile I'll have to say, 'Hey, watch it when I'm around.'"



Loyal Friends

Some of the teens in the stake are lucky enough to have good

friends who share some of their standards and defend their beliefs to others.


Mackenzie Nimmo, 16, of the Bedford Ward says, "My friends are really understanding and completely accept my religion. They are happy that I have something that I actually stand for and believe in, but sometimes it gets difficult. I may know that there's a big party that's going to be happening, but I'm not invited. My friends look out for me. They say, 'She won't want to come to this. We don't want her to be here because of the things that are going to be happening.'"

A Popular Pamphlet

Teens seem to love having the standards written down in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet. They find it handy to give to friends and to refer to.

Megan E. Snyder, 17, of the Bedford Ward says, "I have the little one in my wallet, and I whip that out so many times. I love it."

These teens share the challenge of being few in number yet standing out at their various schools because they choose to follow Church standards. Defending what they believe is often a daily event.



"My cousin has one, and he's not Mormon," says Olivia Searle, 16, of the Laconia Ward. "He carries it in his wallet. Lots of my friends have a copy."

"They always find it really interesting," says Elisabeth Earnshaw. "Some think that people don't respect Mormon standards, but I find that if I ever discuss them with anyone, most of the time they are very accepting. They may not understand, but they respect someone who is able to follow those standards."

Leading to Happiness

Following Church standards makes these New Hampshire teens happier. Megan tries to explain it to her friends. "My friends ask me why I get up early and sacrifice my time for seminary and Church. They also tell me all the time how happy I am. They don't see the correlation. I'm excited about things I do, and I work hard. They ask, 'Where does that come from?' It's partly from my parents, and it's also from my Church activity. They don't

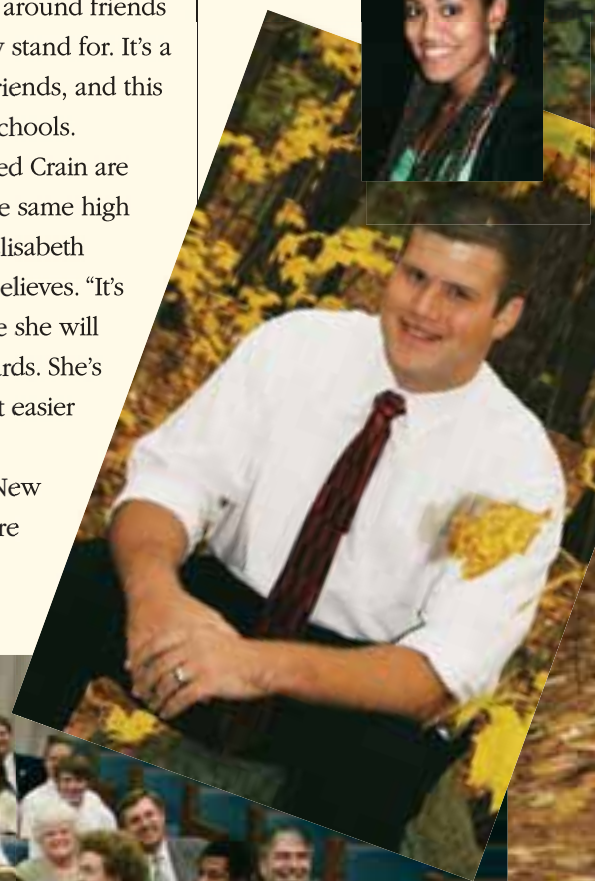
see how happy I am because of staying close to the Church. They are so worried about things. They don't have any benefits that last."

Having to stand up for their standards makes these teens stronger. They love to get together at stake events to be around friends who don't question what they stand for. It's a relief to have these kinds of friends, and this support carries over to their schools.

Elisabeth Earnshaw and Jared Crain are in the same ward and go to the same high school. Jared loves watching Elisabeth defend herself and what she believes. "It's fun to watch Elisabeth because she will always stand up for her standards. She's awesome. And it helps make it easier for me too."

For youth in the Concord New Hampshire Stake, standards are simply a part of life. And that makes their lives better. **NE**

All the stake's youth and leaders crowd the benches for a photo (below). They love getting together with Church friends they don't see often.



WHAT'S NOT ON THE WARNING LABEL

BY BRAD WILCOX

For the most harmful effects of smoking and drinking, read this list.

The world teaches that smoking and drinking will make you more confident and popular. The truth is that these habits will deprive you of your self-worth and disqualify you for many blessings.

Warning: What you are about to drink or smoke can kill you!

Labels with essentially that message appear on cans of beer and packages of cigarettes everywhere, and yet these products are still being picked up and used by teenagers. Apparently it's not enough to know that alcohol and tobacco are linked to dozens of life-threatening diseases.

Warnings labels inform readers of the physical consequences of using tobacco and alcohol, but there are other consequences as well—serious emotional, social, and spiritual consequences that never show up on any of the warning labels. Still, they are as real and frightening as cancer or heart disease. When seen in an eternal perspective, these consequences can be even more devastating.

WARNING: Beer and cigarettes distance you from the Spirit.

The immediate consequence of any sin is loss of the Spirit. The scriptures make it clear that the Spirit will not always strive with men (see Genesis 6:3; Ether 15:19; D&C 1:33) and that no unclean thing can dwell with God (see 1 Nephi 10:21; Mosiah 2:36–38).

Isn't the Holy Ghost a member of the Godhead? Perhaps that's why we must be baptized—completely cleaned—before we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 68:25; 84:64). One cigarette may not be enough to give you emphysema, but it is enough to alienate you from the Spirit. One sip of beer may not make you an alcoholic and leave you penniless and homeless, but it is enough to leave you without the Spirit.

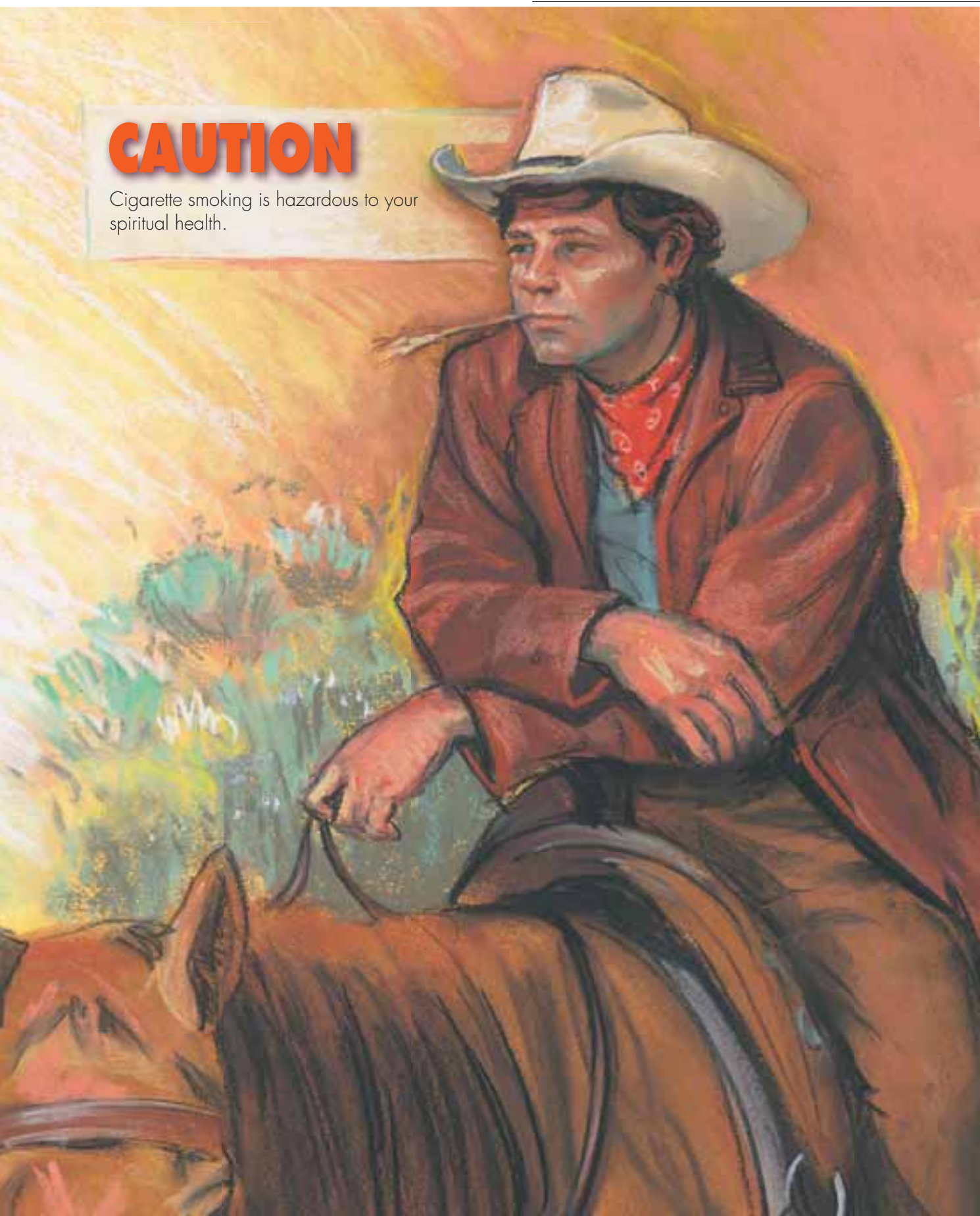
“So the Spirit leaves,” someone may say, “so what?” Anyone who would ask such a question is overlooking the fact that when we lose the Spirit, we automatically lose safety, companionship, perspective, strength, peace, and joy.

WARNING: Beer and cigarettes deprive you of agency.

This precious right to choose for ourselves is inhibited when we become involved in substances that are habit forming. When I taught sixth grade, one of my students, Carter Chow, drew a poster that won a statewide contest. Carter had simply drawn a hand in chains, with the links of the chain made of cigarettes. The caption said, “Smoking makes you a slave.”

CAUTION

Cigarette smoking is hazardous to your spiritual health.



When you smoke and drink, you aren't just affecting yourself. Your decision to break the Word of Wisdom also hurts your parents and others who love you.

WARNING: Beer and cigarettes lower self-esteem.

The smiles we see in the ads (usually on the faces of models and/or athletes) certainly don't indicate low self-esteem. However, most LDS young people who break the Word of Wisdom are really just searching for a way to camouflage their low self-worth and find acceptance and approval. Those who don't feel cool, strong, and popular often seek desperately for ways to appear cool, strong, and popular. Sadly, once the cigarettes and drinks are finished, feelings of self-worth have gone up in smoke, and young people feel as empty as the crumpled, discarded beer cans. Confidence doesn't come from a can. It comes from knowing I can. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Feeling good about yourself doesn't come from lighting up. It comes from being true to the light inside of you (see D&C 84:46).

WARNING: Beer and cigarettes diminish ambition.

When someone becomes so focused on how and where to get the next supply, when the next party is happening, and how to avoid the police, there is little time and energy left for pursuing positive goals. Grades plummet. Extracurricular activities evaporate. Good job opportunities disappear. And future dreams are severely limited.

WARNING: Beer and cigarettes lead to other problems.

Even if some young people are lucky enough to postpone health problems for a few years, their lives are still endangered by the way smoking and drinking impairs their ability to operate vehicles, erodes their good judgment, and gives a false sense of bravado that leads to conflicts and fights. We rarely hear of someone breaking the Word of Wisdom without also hearing other problems

mentioned in the same breath. It may be immorality, shoplifting, lying, pornography, inappropriate music and dress, depression, and in some cases even suicide.

A bishop once told me, "Mormons don't keep smokers and drinkers out of the Church. Smokers and drinkers usually keep themselves out." When LDS young people smoke and drink, they often feel so guilty and self-conscious that it impairs their desire to go to church, attend seminary, and participate in wholesome family activities.

WARNING: Beer and cigarettes limit your friendships.

Every sip of beer means fewer LDS young people for you to date and associate with. Every puff on a cigarette means fewer bright, intelligent, and health-minded individuals you can call friends. Soon those who break the Word of Wisdom are bound—not only by bad physical habits but by the impression that their circle of friends can grow no larger than those who share their same habits.

WARNING: Beer and cigarettes keep you from the temple.

Of course, those who use such substances are welcome at an open house. But drinking and smoking do not open the House of the Lord's blessings in one's life. Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants promises that in addition to physical well-being, those who keep the Word of Wisdom will find "wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (v. 19). Those who fail to qualify for temple recommends by failing to live the Word of Wisdom certainly are kept from the wisdom and personal revelation available to worthy Church members in the temple. Those who choose smoking and drinking over carrying a temple recommend are choosing to live without the great treasures of knowledge available in the temple—knowledge that is indeed "hidden" from the

eyes and ears of those who refuse to prepare themselves to receive it.

When people disqualify themselves from temple privileges, they also disqualify themselves from serving full-time missions and being sealed to a spouse and children for eternity. No wonder President Ezra Taft Benson said: "The condition of the physical body can affect the spirit. That is why the Lord gave us the Word of Wisdom. . . . The human body is the tabernacle of the spirit and God expects that it be kept clean and unimpaired" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1998], 475–477).

WARNING: Beer and cigarettes break your parents' hearts.

"It's my life, and it's my body," said one young woman, "so who cares what I do?" Can she really be so insensitive to the feelings of the parents who gave her life and were instruments in the creation of her physical body? When a child makes poor choices, the disappointment, frustration, and failure felt by parents is overpowering. Everyone has heard the old saying that you can count the seeds in an apple, but you can't count the apples in a seed. In the same way, I believe that you can count the drops of beer in a can or bottle, but you can't count the tears LDS parents will shed if their children choose to drink. You can weigh the amount of tobacco rolled in a cigarette, but you can't weigh the private grief felt by LDS parents whose children choose to smoke.

Warning labels on beer and cigarettes clearly state the physical dangers of drinking and smoking. I have tried to warn of the emotional, social, and spiritual dangers connected with breaking the Word of Wisdom. Those who live the Word of

Wisdom will experience wonderful benefits in their lives. Along with improved health, they will be able to feel the Spirit, safeguard agency, improve feelings of self-worth, pursue positive goals, broaden friendships with other worthy young people, strengthen family ties, avoid additional problems, go to the temple, and bring happiness to others. **NE**



WARNING
Drinking beer
may break your
mother's heart.

NO REGRETS



Focused on the future, we did not surrender to the feelings of the moment.

I met Mark when I came home from college for a visit. He was a young officer in the United States military, tall and handsome, just starting an exciting career. We liked each other immediately and spent as much time together as possible. It seemed we were made for each other. He visited me at college, and by the time I returned home for the summer vacation I knew I had to make a decision about my future.

After a few dates Mark had asked me to seriously consider not returning to college in the fall so that we could spend more time together. I had worked and saved through high school so that I could have a college education, and I just couldn't give up my dreams of college so soon.

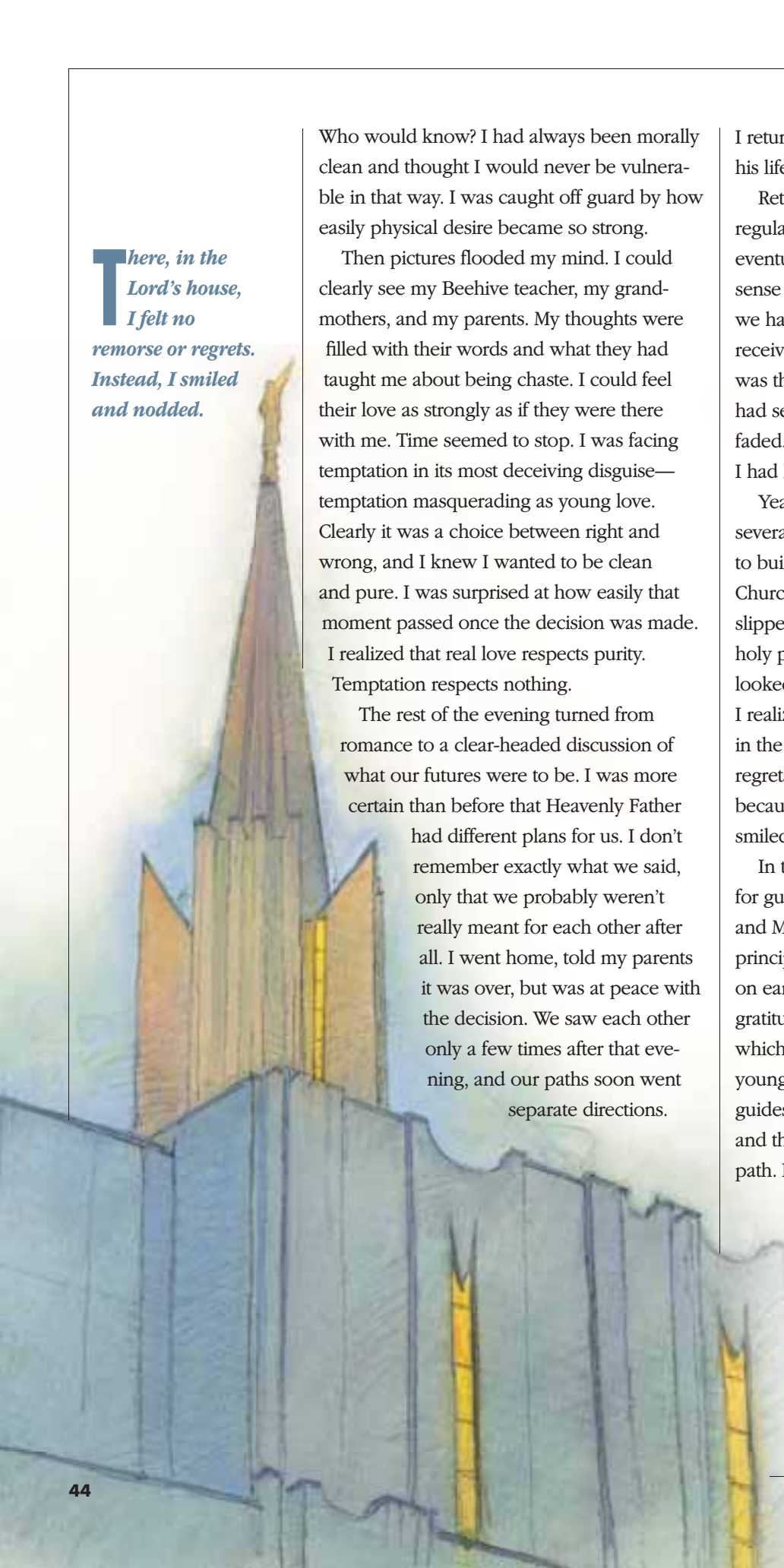
No matter how fervently I prayed about marriage and a future with Mark, I never

felt peaceful with that decision. I thought it through many times and came up with many reasons why we could have a wonderful a life together. I had always wanted to travel and knew I would love living abroad in interesting foreign lands with him in the military.

One special evening, after a romantic dinner, we decided to drive around a lovely little lake. We drove slowly as if we might save the magic of the moment. We stopped not far from my home and spoke quietly and seriously about our future and how much we cared for each other.

At that moment it would have been easy to go too far with my affections, and he with his.

I was caught off guard by the strength of temptation masquerading as young love. Who would know if I gave in?



There, in the
Lord's house,
I felt no
remorse or regrets.
Instead, I smiled
and nodded.

Who would know? I had always been morally clean and thought I would never be vulnerable in that way. I was caught off guard by how easily physical desire became so strong.

Then pictures flooded my mind. I could clearly see my Beehive teacher, my grandmothers, and my parents. My thoughts were filled with their words and what they had taught me about being chaste. I could feel their love as strongly as if they were there with me. Time seemed to stop. I was facing temptation in its most deceiving disguise—temptation masquerading as young love. Clearly it was a choice between right and wrong, and I knew I wanted to be clean and pure. I was surprised at how easily that moment passed once the decision was made. I realized that real love respects purity.

Temptation respects nothing.

The rest of the evening turned from romance to a clear-headed discussion of what our futures were to be. I was more certain than before that Heavenly Father had different plans for us. I don't remember exactly what we said, only that we probably weren't really meant for each other after all. I went home, told my parents it was over, but was at peace with the decision. We saw each other only a few times after that evening, and our paths soon went separate directions.

I returned to college, and he went on with his life. We had no contact after that summer.

Returning to school, I moved back into regular college life, dating a few great guys, eventually meeting a fine man. He had a sense of humor and a strong testimony, and we had common goals. It was then that I received strong, positive confirmation he was the right person for me to marry. What had seemed so important the summer before faded. Mark just became just one of the guys I had known.

Years passed, and with a husband and several children, I was a busy mother trying to build an eternal family, working in the Church. One day I found some free time and slipped away to attend the temple. In that holy place, I noticed a temple worker who looked vaguely familiar. Only as I passed did I realize it was my old boyfriend Mark. There, in the Lord's house, I felt no remorse or regrets. I didn't have to turn away in shame because of things we had done. Instead I smiled and nodded.

In the celestial room I gave quiet thanks for guidance from Church leaders, parents, and Mutual teachers who had taught the principle of chastity. In the most sacred place on earth, the holy temple, I was filled with gratitude for sure and true commandments, which kept me safe and clean. Once I was young and inexperienced, but I had the best guides in all eternity, our Savior's teachings and the Holy Ghost, to direct me to the right path. He knew what was right for me.

In the years since then, I have had a good, happy life, and I am sure Mark has had the same. I heard that he left the military, served a mission, and was later called to be a bishop. Ours are separate lives, free and clear, with only good memories. I am just one girl he dated; he is one guy I dated—and that is all. **NE**

1 CORINTHIANS

10:13

The Apostle Paul taught us that God will help us when we are faced with temptation.

Temptation

Satan tries to tempt us with those things that will draw us away from God's Spirit. But we can use our agency to choose good over evil. If we are prayerful and obedient, Heavenly Father will help us withstand temptation. Here are some things you can do to overcome temptation and remain close to the Spirit (from *True to the Faith* [2004], 174–76):

- Center your life on the Savior.
- Pray for strength.
- Study the scriptures daily.
- Fill your life with goodness.
- Avoid tempting places and situations.
- Strive to influence others for good.
- Never hesitate in your decisions to withstand temptation.

Faithful

Faithful—sure and true

A way to escape

There are many ways to escape temptation. For Joseph in Egypt, escape was a literal thing—he ran away (see Genesis 39:12). We may not always have to flee from temptation in this way, but we all have to overcome it somehow. Perhaps you could write in your journal about a specific experience in which Heavenly Father has helped you avoid or escape temptation.



Common

"Temptation is a part of life and will be experienced in one way or another by every traveler through mortality. However, the Apostle Paul, acknowledging this truth, gave us this assurance [1 Corinthians 10:13].

"It has been said that conscience warns us as a friend before it punishes us as a judge. The expression of one young man is a sermon in itself. When asked when he was happiest, he replied, 'I'm happiest when I don't have a guilty conscience.' "

President Thomas S. Monson, "Happiness—The Universal Quest," *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 2.

13 There hath no temptation "taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."



Able to bear it

"When you have taken a determined stand for right, when you have established personal standards and made covenants to keep them, when temptations come and you act according to your standards, you will be reinforced and given strength beyond your own capacity if that is needed. Difficulty comes when you enter the battle of temptation without a fixed plan."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Do What Is Right," *Ensign*, June 1997, 53.

Editors' note: This page is not meant to be a comprehensive explanation of the selected scripture verse, only a starting point for your own study.

FRIENDSHIP OR HONESTY?

BY EMILY HOPKINS

I placed my heavy textbook down on the table as the bell rang for first period. My biology teacher was finishing up some work at his computer. "Hello Hop," he said as I walked in. I sat down and unzipped my pink backpack, pulling out my homework while the other students came through the open door. I had worked hard to get my worksheet on plants done late the night before.

I greeted my friend sitting in the chair next to me. I had fun chatting

with her every morning at the beginning of biology class.

"Emily, I need your help," she said.

"What can I do for you?" I responded cheerfully.

"I couldn't get my homework done, and I was wondering if I could use your answers. I've missed so much being sick, and I really need to get this assignment in or my grade will drop."

My mind started to whirl. "But isn't that cheating?" I questioned in amazement.

"Well, I already did this assignment, I just don't have it with me now. Can I hurry and copy your paper before class starts?"

She was my friend and I really wanted to help her. It was a fill-in-the-blank worksheet, so the teacher wouldn't know they were my answers. He was busy, so he wouldn't see her copying my notes. I sat there undecided, a battle raging in my mind. Should I help her cheat, or should I refuse to help my friend? It was true that she had been sick and missed



a lot of class, and I really wanted to be a good friend.

As I hesitated, my mind made a long list of reasons why it would be OK to help her. On the other hand, I knew it wouldn't be right. Then I made a choice. I wanted to be a reliable friend, but even more, I wanted to be honest.

Apprehensively, I turned toward her. "I wish I could help you, but I don't feel right about letting you use my answers," I said. "I am really sorry."

It was hard for me to disappoint my friend, but I had a good feeling inside, one that comes from knowing I had kept my integrity and been honest even with a good friendship on the line. As my teacher started the day's lesson, many students in that first period biology class thought it was just a normal day. But for me, it was a day to remember. That day marked an important decision in my life. That choice defined what was honest and what wasn't honest. The next time I faced someone asking me to share my answers, I had already made my decision. I had made the resolve to be honest under all circumstances. **NE**

NOT A DROP

BY TAMSYN OPIE

Where I live, we have no cinemas, no bowling alleys. The only thing a lot of teenagers think there is to do around here, it seems, is party and drink alcohol. Peer pressure can also be overwhelming. What makes it worse is that there are only a few active

GRATITUDE AT TWILIGHT

BY RUSSELL TAYLOR

Let's go," the voice of our group counselor rang out. My week at a college program in Idaho had barely begun, and it was already the end of the first day. We walked a short distance from our campsite with the bright blue of the sun's disappearance just fading below the horizon. Our counselor stopped us all on the dirt road in the center of a field and told us we could go off alone to try to get in touch with the Spirit. I had already chosen my spot—behind us and down a hill, in a stand of trees.

As I slipped away from the rest of my group, I sat down in the grass and began to think. I began to hear the noises of small insects in the grass around me. I then picked up a small pink flower, noticing the details and

intricacies that made it. As the sky grew darker, I looked up, noticing the perfectly clear field of millions of stars hovering above me. As I sat thinking, the scriptures about God's creations popped into my mind. God had created worlds more numerous than the sands of the sea, and yet I looked down at the flower in my hand, at how intricately formed it was. The rest of the week I felt grateful for God's creations and His care for even the smallest of them. **NE**

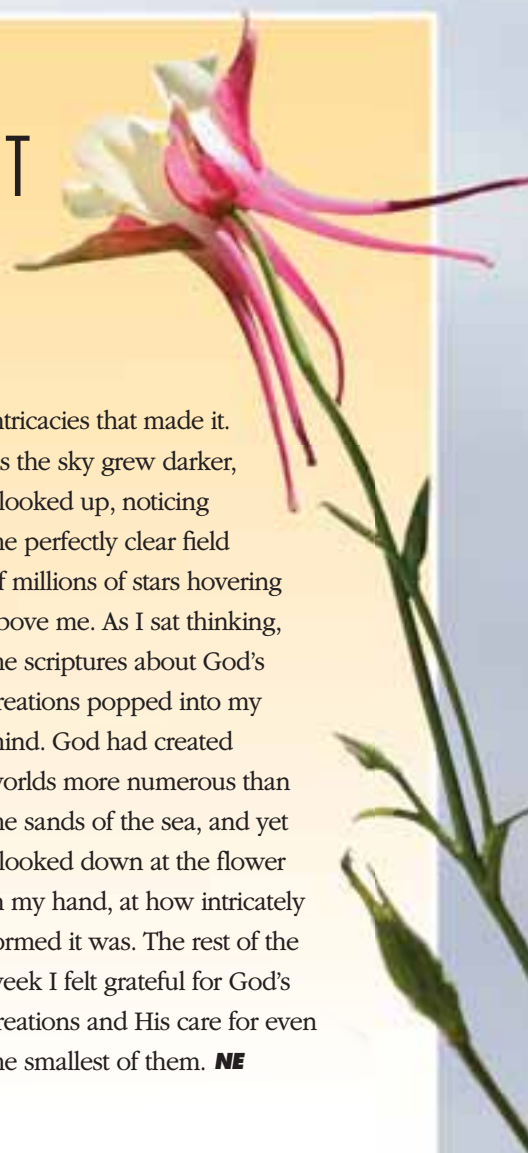
members of the Church at my school.

One afternoon at work I talked with a male friend of mine. The conversation eventually turned to drinking. "I don't drink, ever. Not a drop," I said. He gave me a strange look, and then, in a low voice, said, "I wish I could do that. I could never stick with decisions like that." He started picking on me for my standards, but I knew that deep down he fully respected me.

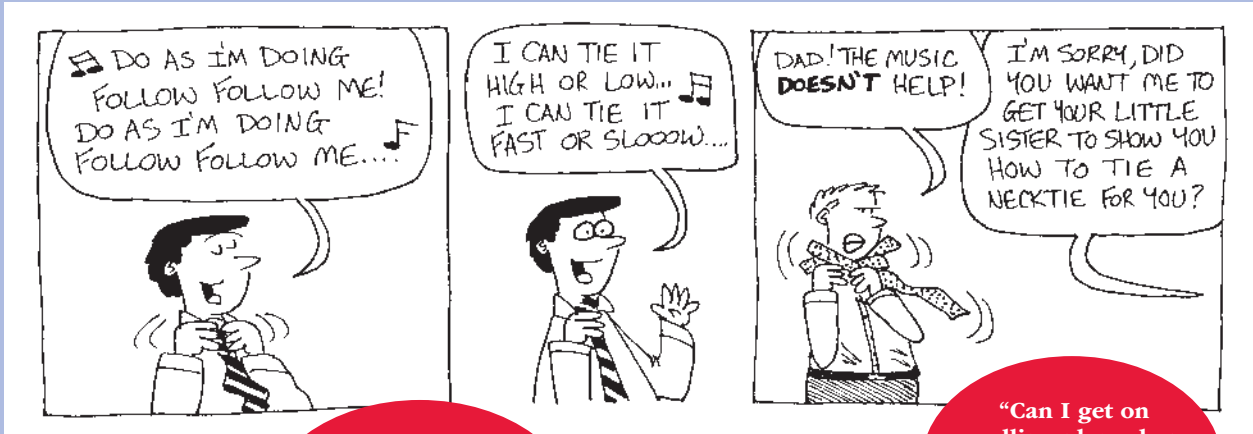
A few months later, the same friend had a birthday party, and I went, not knowing what would be going on there. My friend walked around with a \$50 note in his hands, which I jokingly snatched from his

hand, thanking him. He sat down next to me. "Okay," he said. "You can keep the money, but only if you sip some alcohol." I politely refused and gave him the money. He was shocked that somebody would pass up a \$50 note. Then, he told me how strong and brave I was. The person sitting on the other side of him said good things about me. It was cool—one of the best feelings I have ever had.

I learned that people respect our standards and expect us to stay true to them. If we're not true to our standards, we don't earn respect from them or ourselves. People notice everything we do. **NE**



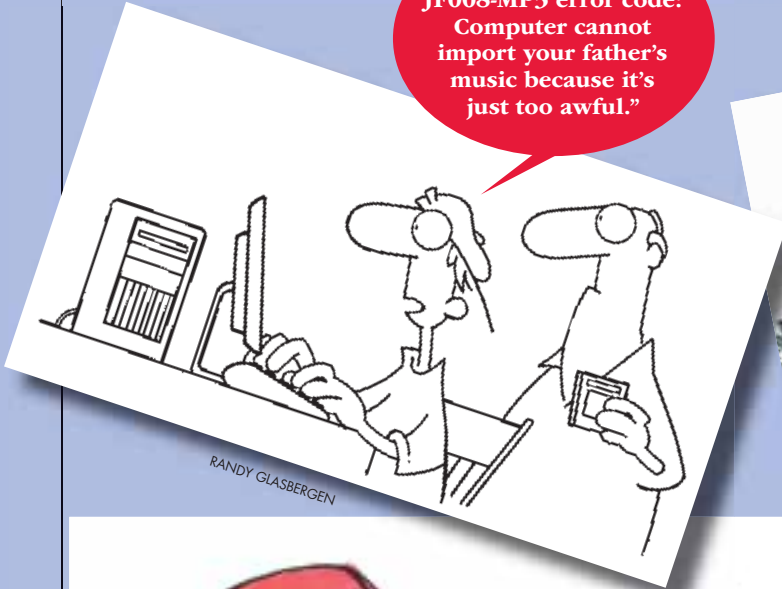
THE EXTRA SMILE



RYAN STOKER

"I'm getting a JF008-MP3 error code: Computer cannot import your father's music because it's just too awful."

"Can I get on a calling plan where you only charge me for intelligent conversation?"



RANDY GLASBERGEN



JON CLARK



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



MY KITE

BY ERIN CAMP WORLAND

I went outside to fly my kite
One breezy day in spring.
I wondered just how high it would go,
So let out all the string.
With the end held firmly in my grasp,
My thoughts began to flow:
Oh, how much higher could it fly
If I'd just let it go?
With that, my hand released the string,
And much to my surprise,
It fell straight down
Instead of soaring through the skies.
What went wrong, I asked myself,
This made no sense at all.
I tried and tried again, but each time
All it did was fall.
So, one last time I ran
To let the breeze lift up the kite.
I let the string out to the end
But this time held on tight.
I smiled as I gazed upon
Those colors way up high.
I realized that, like my kite,
We too need string to fly.
Our string is called the gospel,
And its purpose now is sure.
Temptation's wind may tug and pull,
But our string can help us soar.
I'll hold on tight to what I know,
And like my kite I'll be.
The gospel doesn't hold us back,
Instead it makes us free!



WHAT'S INSIDE

- Remove the insert—four cards with interesting questions and answers.
- Tear out two wallet-sized copies of *For the Strength of Youth*.
- Read President Monson's words on finding strength through standards.
- Find the section in the center of the magazine where each standard has a story, example, or explanation.
- Read about what is not on the warning labels of alcohol and cigarettes.
- Find a new song and listen to it being performed online.

Read more articles about teens dealing with Church standards with friends and at school.

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