

# GET READY

## LISTEN UP, SOLDIER! IT'S TIME TO GEAR UP AS YOU ENTER SCHOOL.

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**Y**our school is a battleground. Oh, of course, it's a place where you learn and grow, socialize and have fun. But beyond that, it's also the site of a daily struggle in the ongoing contest for hearts, minds, and souls.

This battle is part of the great war all of us have been waging since before we were born, and though you may think that this combat zone is just an insignificant skirmish in the bigger picture of that war, be assured that the enemy doesn't see it that way. He looks for any weakness in your defenses, relishes every small victory, and will press his advantage wherever he can, whether it's through sin, apathy, or discouragement.

### BULLYING

*It's always been around, but with today's technology, there are new and innovative ways to intimidate, humiliate, and manipulate people. Strong vs. weak, popular vs. unpopular—it's likely going on somewhere in your school at any given time.*

### > THE DEVIL'S D.A.R.T.S. (DEDICATED ASSAULT ON THE RESOLVE OF TEENAGE SAINTS)

The adversary will try to wear down your defenses over time through a constant barrage of his "fiery darts" (Ephesians 6:16). If it sometimes feels like you're being attacked on several fronts at once, that's probably because you are. The Lord has warned us, "Behold, the enemy is combined" (D&C 38:12).

At school, some of the projectiles pointed at you may seem petty by themselves, but taken together, they can tempt you, try you, and tear you down. Here are just a few things to be on your guard against, all of which can be amplified by peer pressure.



# FOR BATTLE

## SWEARING

At a young age, and certainly by the time you move on to the next level of schooling, many of your peers start peppering their language with profanity and vulgarity. It starts to feel like it's everywhere.

## CHEATING

This ought to be straightforward—cheating, including plagiarism (copying someone else's words for work that's supposed to be your own), is wrong. But so many people do it—and rationalize it—that you may start feeling like you have to cheat just to keep up.

## DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Don't get too complacent on this one. Some people will try to get you to experience whatever buzz-inducing substance they've got, whether it's beer, cigarettes, hallucinogenic seeds, illegal drugs, or prescription medications.

As you prepare to once again enter the fray, remember one thing: *You can win this battle.*

So, how can you defend yourself (and others) from the surrounding onslaughts? The Lord has given you some strong protection.

## > THE LORD'S S.I.D.E. (STANDARD-ISSUE DEFENSIVE EQUIPMENT, A.K.A ARMOR)

Almost 2,000 years ago the Apostle Paul described the “armor of God” that helps us “stand against the wiles of the devil” (see Ephesians 6:11–20). This basic armor is still around and very much needed. But just as the tactics and weaponry used in physical warfare have changed over the centuries, so the adversary has adjusted his spiritual warfare against us. And so to win the war, we must adapt our understanding of the basic defensive equipment of a disciple and apply it to our changing realities.

### BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SHIELD OF FAITH

A breastplate protects vital organs, including your heart. The shield helps you “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16). Modern body armor uses tough synthetic fibers, ceramics, light metals, and other materials to resist bullets and—perhaps more important—fragments from explosions. Those can be compared to gossip, cyberbullying, and swearing—fragments of hate, misery, and filth flying everywhere, affecting not only the intended targets but others as well. Your righteousness can help you stand up against it all and lead others to a circle of safety away from the shrapnel.

In addition, the essence of righteousness is obedience. Obeying the Word of Wisdom unapologetically and inviting others to do the same will strengthen your armor and help you survive.

#### NOTES

1. Some studies show that intervention by peers is the most effective kind of intervention when it comes to bullying.
2. For more on the gift of discernment, read the rest of Elder Bednar's article, as well as one by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles called “Gifts of the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 17–18.

## BASIC GEAR



## HELMET OF SALVATION

This goes on your head, of course, which houses your mind. The Savior has told us, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36). For example, even though there may be filthy talk all around you, when you look to Him, He will help you keep the bad thoughts out and point your mind where it should go.

## LOINS GIRT WITH TRUTH AND FEET SHOD WITH PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Anciently, girding the loins had to do with mobility and readiness—tying up loose pieces of clothing so that it was easier to run. Having feet shod means they’re protected and you’re ready to move.

Sometimes you need to run into a battle—to defend and show kindness to those being bullied,<sup>1</sup> to stand up for truth and virtue in the face of mocking and scorn. And sometimes your best option is the “Joseph in Egypt” defense—run away (see Genesis 39:12). In either case, be ready.

## SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD

This is the only weapon you carry, but it’s powerful when wielded in defense of truth and righteousness. Just as the Savior did, you can turn to the scriptures when faced with Satan’s temptations (see Matthew 4:1–11). When downloading and plagiarizing an essay from the Internet seems like the only way, remember, “do that which is honest” (2 Corinthians 13:7) and “the integrity of the upright shall guide [you]” (Proverbs 11:3).



### Survival Guide

“You are growing up in enemy territory,” says President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Find his counsel on “How to Survive in Enemy Territory” at [lds.org/enemyNE9](http://lds.org/enemyNE9).

## ADDITIONAL GEAR



### NIGHT VISION GOGGLES

These help you see threats that surround you, even when there’s darkness all around. This can be compared to the gift of discernment, which is a gift of the Spirit. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said that this gift “is a light of protection and direction in a world that grows increasingly dark” (“Quick to Observe,” Ensign, Dec. 2006, 34).<sup>2</sup>



### COMMUNICATION DEVICES

When he was talking about the armor of God, the Apostle Paul mentioned “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18). Keep in constant contact with central command by praying to your Heavenly Father.



### GPS LOCATOR

You’re never really lost. God’s love helps us know where we stand. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has said, “Though we may feel lost and without compass, God’s love encompasses us completely” (“The Love of God,” Ensign, Nov. 2009, 22).



### RADAR

This helps you see some attacks from far away, as do the words of modern prophets, seers, and revelators, who warn us of the evils to come so that we can prepare for them.