

I know that this is the Church of God. I am happy to be active in it, and hope I shall remain so all the days of my life. I found great joy in being acquainted with these wonderful men. No finer men exist anywhere in the world, whose aims and purposes and attitudes are cleaner and more wholesome and more beneficial to their associates than is the case with these men. It is a joy to know them and to associate with them, and I want to strive to remain as close as possible all the days of my life to men who exert that kind of influence upon their fellow men.

I have never heard a single expression from the mouths of any one of these men that would have a tendency to lead any one of us astray or into unrighteous paths. They are always telling us to live good lives and be faithful members of the Church and be obedient to the gospel plan of Jesus Christ. God bless them, and God bless us and help us to be faithful and loyal and consistent, and avoid all forms of hypocrisy and be real "livers" of our religion instead of just "professors," and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER MARK E. PETERSEN

#### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

This conference has certainly been a great inspiration to me. I am grateful for the strength that I have received from my brethren as they have talked to me and to you. I am very glad that the Lord has blessed them so, and I hope that he will bless me as he has blessed them.

#### GRATITUDE FOR FAITH OF YOUTH

I have been more than happy with the participation of the young people in this conference. Like you, I was thrilled in my soul by the singing of the Brigham Young University chorus, yesterday; by the Aaronic Priesthood chorus in our priesthood meeting last night, and now again, by the singing of these wonderful young people from Ricks College. I am glad for them. As I have visited the various stakes and met with your young people in firesides and other meetings, I have been everlastingly grateful for them. I am glad for their strength, for their faith, and their devotion, and I have a feeling of confidence that in the years to come, when the affairs of the Church are given into their hands, that all will be well.

I realize that there are many pitfalls in the paths of our young people, and some fall into those pitfalls, and for them we grieve. With this in mind, I would like to direct my remarks more particularly to the young people, and I desire to talk about cigarets.

#### REVELATION ON USE OF TOBACCO

I wonder, young people of the Church, if you have ever serious-

ly thought about what a cigaret means to a Latter-day Saint. It means more to us than it does to other people. I know that some of you will say that you do not see why, that you have friends in other churches who smoke, and they seem to get along all right, and their churches do not criticize them for it, and you do not see why our Church takes the attitude it does on this subject. Just remember, if you will, that the Lord has not spoken to your young friends in the other churches, nor to the heads of their churches, giving them any divine revelation directing them to abstain from these harmful things. In their churches they do not even accept the principle of modern revelation.

But with us, it is entirely different. God has spoken to us by his latter-day prophets. He has given us modern-day revelation, declaring that tobacco is not good for man. That is the word and the will of the Lord to the Latter-day Saints. Whenever we turn our backs upon that principle, to that extent we turn our backs upon the Lord.

The average young American is an individual who loves freedom, wants to be his own boss, and does not like to have other people regulate his life for him. But some of them misunderstand their independence, and in a spirit of misunderstanding say, "Well, if I want to take a smoke, that is my business. I have a perfect right to. It is a free country, isn't it?" But in submitting to the enslaving influence of nicotine, they contribute to a loss of the very freedom they talk about.

#### CIGARET HABIT DETERMINES COURSE OF LIFE

If you adopt the cigaret habit, it will, in large measure determine the kind of life you are going to live, the kind of friends you will have, the kind of person you are going to marry, even the kind of children you may have. Do you regard that as an extreme statement? Let us think about it for a few moments.

If, at your house, you happen to take a newspaper or a magazine which carries cigaret advertising, and those alluring advertisements tempt you to smoke and try to make you think that it is smart to puff on a cigaret, and if you fall for that temptation, what is the first thing you do?

You brush to one side all the teachings of your parents, your Church, and your friends who love you. Instead, you take the advice of a tobacco merchant who has no more interest in you than to get what money he can out of you by making you a slave to his product. And then, you tell yourself, "I think I will buy some cigarets." And so, with a guilty conscience, and feeling as if the eyes of the whole world are upon you, you go and buy your first package of cigarets. Then, you wonder where you are going to smoke them. You do not want to smoke them in front of your parents because you know it is wrong, and you know it would break their hearts. You do not want to smoke in front of your non-smoking friends because you know

what they would tell you. And so, you go some place where neither your friends nor your parents can see you. Then you open the package, and you take out that first cigaret, put it in your mouth and light it. Then you make a great discovery: You find out that by sucking on one end of that cigaret, with the light on the other, you can actually get smoke out of it; and having read what you have in the advertisements, and having puffed away on that cigaret, the whole operation inflates your ego. So you throw back your head, and you blow the smoke in the air, and you say, "Well, I really must be somebody."

#### SMOKERS ASSOCIATE WITH SMOKERS

You want to smoke some more, inasmuch as you have fallen for that temptation, but you do not want to do it in private all the time, and you do not want to be the only smoker in a non-smoking crowd, so you seek out other people who smoke, so you can smoke with them. It may be that you already have some smoking friends and that they were the ones who provided those first cigarets and that you began to smoke with them. In either case, you begin breaking off your connections with your non-smoking friends and start to form your associates among smokers. And in this way, your cigarets begin to choose your friends for you.

One of the very difficult things about this is that the habits of smokers so often do not stop with smoking, but they include drinking and unwise partying, as well. And when you start going with people who do those things, it will not be very long before you are doing the same things they are, and in that way the cigaret lays the foundation on which you form other evil habits.

#### CIGARET USER STAYS AWAY FROM CHURCH

If you are going to be a smoker, you realize that you are breaking one of the commandments of God, and you do not feel good about it. You know that over in the ward they speak about the Word of Wisdom every once in a while and now that you are a smoker you do not like to hear about the Word of Wisdom. You have heard about it all your life, and you do not want your conscience to hurt you any more than it already does, so tell yourself you had better stay away from your meetings. You begin to realize that for a Latter-day Saint, worship and smoking just do not go together. And so the cigaret persuades you to stay away from church.

When you were small, your parents taught you to pray, and you prayed with more or less regularity all your life. But now that you are a smoker, you feel out of harmony with the Lord and you hesitate to go to him in prayer.

#### CIGARETS UNDERMINE FAITH

You begin to discover that, for a Latter-day Saint, cigarets undermine faith and interfere with prayer. And as a child who has been

hurt avoids the instruments which hurt him, so you with a smarting conscience shy away from your religious duties. You have come to know that spirituality and smoking are incompatible. And so the cigaret persuades you to stop praying.

Your parents also taught you to pay tithing on everything you earned, but now that you do not go to church very often and you are not very proud of your Church connections, you stop paying your tithing. "What is the use?" you ask yourself. You say, "This tithing money itself would buy quite a few cigarets; they cost real money these days." Rather an expensive habit you have picked up! And so the cigaret persuades you to stop paying your tithing.

When you get old enough to get married, you ask yourself, "Whom shall I marry?" If you are a boy you say, "Will it be Helen or Jane or Elizabeth?" And if you are a girl, you ask yourself, "Will it be Tom or Dick or Harry?" And then you tell yourself that you like Tom better than Harry, and Jane better than Elizabeth. And why do you like them better? Because you know them better. And how did you get to know them better? Because they are in the crowd you go with; you know, the smoking crowd. And they do the things that you do. They are like you. Why, you would not even think of marrying one of your former friends in the non-smoking crowd. How ridiculous! Why, he would not smoke with you—would not even take a cocktail, and he would not neck, and he would not pet, and he would not party around. Why, you would not marry one of them! You are going to marry one of your own crowd. And then, if you want to sit down together and smoke together you can, and there is no embarrassment—so you tell yourself. There is nobody to get after you if you fill the house full of tobacco smoke, and no one to nag at you if your cigaret burns a hole in the overstuffed, or if you drop hot ashes on the new rug. So your cigaret has helped to choose the kind of person you marry.

#### WORLDLINESS IN HOME LIFE

What kind of home will you have? There will not be much faith in it, because the cigarets have already undermined your faith. And you will not say very many prayers because the cigarets have taken care of that too. And there will not be much Church activity in your house, because the cigarets have checked that off also. So you will have a worldly home with precious little of spirituality in it. Is that really the kind of home you want?

Will you have any children in that home? If you are like many of the smoking young people of today, you will not have any children. One of them recently said, "Why a squawking kid would cramp my style! Do you think I am going to stay up and walk the floor in the middle of the night with a squealing baby in my arms? None of that for me." And so the cigaret may help to rob you of one of the greatest blessings that God gives us in this life: The privilege of having little children.

But suppose by some chance you do have children—what will they be like? Why, they will be just like you. They will not believe very much in God, because you will not make religion very important in their lives. They will not say very many prayers because you will not teach them how. And they will not go to Church much because you do not. And when they get a little older, they will acquire the other habits that you have, and they will be just about like you. So the cigaret determines in large measure the kind of children you will have.

Do you not see, young people of the Church, how the cigarets can mark out your life for you—point the path for you to follow? Are you, as young Americans, willing to surrender to the tyranny of a cigaret? Are you willing to allow a cigaret to determine in such large measure the kind of life you are going to live? Are you going to allow a cigaret to choose the kind of friends you have, the kind of person you will marry—even the kind of children you may have? Are you, as a young Latter-day Saint, willing to allow a cigaret to determine your attitude toward God?

#### THE VALUE OF RELIGION

Let me ask you one other thing: What do you think of religion, anyway? Is it worth while? Is it worth the trouble we go to? Does it do any good in the world? Or would we be better off without it?

I once read an advertisement which asked this question: "How would you like to live in a town in which there were no churches?" And then it listed the crime and the violence and the debauchery and the filth and the heartbreak and the sorrow and the disappointment associated with persons who reject the soul-elevating, character-building influence of true religion. Would you like to live in a town in which there were no churches? Bring it right down to your own case and ask yourself about it. Would you like to live a life in which there was no religion? Do you really want the degrading influence of the irreligious? That influence is just as deadly for an individual as it is for a whole town.

Choose for yourself: Do you want to live a life without God? The cigaret would like you to. But remember, you can never live successfully without the Lord. So many have tried, and all have failed.

And so I come back to the question with which I began: Have you ever really considered what a cigaret means to a Latter-day Saint? You who smoke now, do not make the mistake of supposing that the Church is against you, because it is not. It only desires your welfare, and it hopes and prays for the day when you will declare your independence from the slavery of nicotine. And you who do not smoke, before you take that first cigaret ask yourself, "Will it help me or hurt me?" Think it over carefully, and may God guide you in your thinking, I earnestly pray for you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.