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MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, I should like to express first of all appreciation for the spiritual uplift of this great conference. I have been inspired by it. I have been blessed by it. I am sure you have.

In his opening address at the last April general conference, our beloved President David O. McKay voiced an appeal for stability and harmony in the home. He expressed this timely concern:

"I am not so sure whether we are maintaining the high standards required of us in our homes. I feel constrained, therefore, at this opening session to make an appeal for more stability, more harmony, and happiness in home life."

I would recommend, my brothers and sisters, a re-reading and study of this inspired and important address. The wisdom of it is so apparent to ward and stake leaders acquainted with the problems in the home life of some Church couples, and the poor relationship between some parents and their children. It is apparent also to the leaders who work with youth. The President's vital message brought immediate response from the administrative officers of the Church Board of Education. They kindly invited me to address and lead a discussion on the subject, "Counseling on Standards of Morality," at a summer seminar scheduled for the Church seminary and institute instructors on the Brigham Young University campus.

In my personal interviews of youth over the Church and in visiting with ward and stake leaders I had gained some knowledge of the existence of moral problems among groups of Church young people. However, in preparation for this special and important assignment with the seminary and institute instructors who are charged with teaching the gospel to the youth of the Church, and therefore are close to them and their problems, I invited to my office a representative group of each, also four choice young people, two boys and two girls. The result of these interviews, together with the information de-

veloped from class discussion of the subject, was revealing and somewhat alarming. At the risk of some possible criticism, I desire frankly and honestly to point out a few facts concerning the disturbing problems that beset us and to make what I hope will be some helpful suggestions.

Here I should like to borrow the opening paragraph of an article I recently prepared for the November issue of the *Relief Society Magazine* which will appear under the caption, "Developing Safeguards for Youth":

"One of the serious problems confronting parents today is a growing tendency of moral laxity among youth. Too many parents are not fully aware that such a condition exists. Therefore, blind to the evils to which their children are exposed, unsuspectingly, therefore thoughtlessly, they contribute to an increase of immoral and sinful practices among them."

Good homes where the gospel is taught and lived and where love predominates are basic to the true character and high moral standards of youth. Parents should recognize there is much in this modern world to challenge the interests of young people. Much of what is offered is good, but some is bad, cheap, and of low standard. The pressures of unwholesome influences are dressed up so enticingly and exerted so cunningly, that if accepted they would destroy the virtues that make for true nobility of character and a life of joy and happiness.

Although we would not want it otherwise, there is so much knowledge present in the world today; and tomorrow and each succeeding day thereafter discovery, invention, and knowledge will continue to increase and become so conveniently available that mental development and learning will come earlier and earlier in the life of youth. With it, unless youth is well grounded in the faith, will come worldly sophistication and material pursuits and pleasures. Without maturity of feelings and judgment, wrong roads and attitudes can be easily

taken that would impair the promise to them of a rich, useful, and happy life.

Parents and leaders of youth must recognize the worldly pressures to which young people are constantly subjected and not close their eyes to the worldly evils that gnaw unceasingly at the true moral patterns ordained of God for man to obey.

Our great challenge is to prepare youth now by wise and understanding teaching and counseling to escape these lurking perils that would destroy their very souls. To wait until after sins are committed before taking action will not eliminate the consequences nor the sorrow and heartache that follow transgression. Satan, through his human aids, has cunningly devised alluring schemes and enticements that confuse and frustrate youth as to the true values of life. The moral and spiritual standards of the gospel are frequently endangered. Knowledge of life and its facts are too often obtained by youth from wrong and undesirable sources because the home and parents, the proper source, too frequently close the door by side-stepping the issue or question, when a timely, intelligent, or understanding answer or explanation might change for good the whole course of a young person's life.

No doubt many parents lack an adequate vocabulary to express themselves about such intimate matters, but if they are parents of teen-agers, does it excuse them from learning and securing proper counsel and training to fulfil their God-given responsibility of bringing up children in the true ways of the Lord?

If parents would take full advantage of the plans and programs of the Church through the priesthood quorums, the auxiliary organizations, and the Brigham Young University extension courses in family living, they would competently qualify themselves for the important task of youth guidance. If parents do not fully become acquainted with the problems of their children when growing up in this age of freedom from restraints in boy-girl relationships, can they recognize the danger signals that may be developing in their lives?

Most young people are wonderful, teachable, and controllable. The adult

world with its conduct confuses them. Correction in this area would largely solve the perplexities and the problems of youth. How versed are parents in the jargon of speech and terminology employed by youth to enable them to evaluate the meaning and seriousness of necking, light and heavy petting, dare games, self-abuse, and other evil practices with which youth often are too well acquainted, that weaken restraints and resistance and thereby destroy the true moral concepts of life?

Parents, live close to your children and more particularly during the adolescent years while they are in the process of growing up and experiencing physical changes, and also new and strange emotions that they do not fully understand. It is a critical period in their lives, when a constant counseling and stabilizing influence is so needful and helpful. It is a time for them to learn about the strange feelings that motivate their lives and actions. There are developing within them emotional disturbances and conflicts difficult to control, and if the knowledge and help they require cannot be obtained from parents, youth may solicit help from undesirable sources or from associates whose knowledge and sense of values are as immature and unsound as their own. Here lies a serious danger and pitfall that must be avoided.

Perhaps children should not blame parents for their own mistakes, but often they do, following a transgression that proper and timely instruction and counsel could have prevented. A simple and honest answer to questions and problems so vital to youth could make the big difference in their lives when temptations arise.

Parents should build comradeship and love in the home and eliminate strained relations to insure stability and security of home life for children. In dealing with children there should always be love and kindness, yet firmness, when setting up controls and rules of conduct.

Youth, if properly taught, for the most part expect and desire restrictions to guide them in social activities and dates. Safeguards and protective counsel are necessary to fortify them against

familiarities and intimacies that lead to sin.

What appears to youth as fun, excitement, or glamour may present lurking dangers. If parents enjoy the confidence of their children and know what their plans are, they will then be able to see the hidden perils before them and from the experience of parenthood give protective guidance and counsel to help control their emotions and to safeguard virtue and honor, so essential to youth for a happy and satisfying life.

Personal ownership or freedom in the use of family cars seems to be a need in the lives of youth today, yet without adequate controls and the observance of respectable hours following parties or dances the cars often become agents for intimacies and moral infractions.

The responsibility of parents and youth leaders in this modern scientific world we live in is to teach and show youth how to live among these modern factors and still express a wholesome, integrated response to them and build up a set of standards of life, objectives that will worthily cull out of life the things that destroy and cultivate those virtues that build security and peace of soul. Parents should help youth to realize a clean mind and body make for happiness now and eternally.

Young people today have too much excitement, distraction, and passive entertainment. Perhaps we do too much for them and rob them of the excitement, legitimate and fully satisfying, of the creativeness which youth formerly enjoyed.

Morality is one of the highest achievements to which a human being can aspire. It indicates full and complete emotional maturity and orientation. It is, therefore, very complex and reaches into fields of living which we ordinarily do not associate with morality. If anything interferes with this development of maturity, it may be the underlying cause of immorality.

The home environment and training, then, become an important and prime consideration. A young man made this profound statement:

"I know in my own life one of the reasons I was chaste was that I never thought of being otherwise. I had a good, wholesome environment and a

deep love for my parents, and the temptations were eliminated partly because of it."

Parents and teachers, also speakers from the pulpit, throughout the years have emphasized to the youth of the Church full observance of the Word of Wisdom. Our young people are thoroughly conscious of this divine law of health. The same constant effort and understanding, however, have not been placed upon the law of chastity. Perhaps it is because of its very delicate and intimate nature that chastity does not receive the same attention in the home, in the classroom, or from the pulpit as the Word of Wisdom.

The violation of moral purity is of the two sins far more serious in the eyes of God. Young people who are guilty of moral offenses are often true observers of the Word of Wisdom. This is an evidence that the law of chastity is not receiving the attention it deserves in the program of the home or of the Church.

In a survey conducted by a group of Church seminaries, each young person was given a list of commandments and laws governing the Church, among which were the Word of Wisdom and chastity. The young people were asked to list these commandments and laws in the order of their importance. In the compilation of the results of this survey most students placed the Word of Wisdom in first position. Somewhere in their training they had not been properly taught that the most serious sin short of committing murder is that of immorality. The true and vitally important values of morality must be clearly and unmistakably established in the minds and hearts of youth to assure acceptance and compliance by them.

Religion should always be on an understandable and practical plane in the home where children can live and enjoy it. Perhaps the Church should provide courses of study for the priesthood, applying the gospel to help the men become better husbands and fathers. A comparable course might be suggested for the Relief Society, dealing with the woman's role as a Latter-day Saint wife, mother, and home builder. Such courses, to have value, must not

deal simply in generalities and admonitions, but must relate the principles of the gospel to the concrete knowledge of human nature and behavior.

God will not excuse us for our failure to find the full life meaning in our theology nor for failure to apply its values to the home and family relationships. Children, through sound home religious instruction, can be helped to attain wholesome satisfactions in life by developing basic loyalties to Deity, to the restored gospel of Christ, to the appointed leaders of the people, to the home and family, and also to the fundamental principles of proper moral conduct.

Mothers, unless absolutely necessary, should not seek employment outside the home, but rather should honorably fulfill their chief mission in life as wife, mother, and homemaker. Many problems of youth stem from mothers accepting remunerative positions that take them and their wholesome influence out of the home. Mother and the home are synonymous, therefore important to the safe rearing of youth.

In closing, my brothers and sisters, I return again to President McKay's appeal as quoted in the beginning of my talk, and suggest that we searchingly ask ourselves these questions: Are we maintaining the high and important gospel standards in our homes? Is family prayer engaged in daily? Do we set a proper example as true and faithful Saints for our children to follow with profit and enrichment of moral character values that will assure them a life of joy and happiness. Does harmony prevail in the home with love as the controlling and motivating force? Does the home provide security and stability to strengthen family ties? Are our children comfortable and happy, fully enjoying the environment and companionship of family living? These and many more like questions we could ask ourselves profitably as we contemplate the

full scope of President McKay's warning.

I sincerely pray that we shall recognize not only the home and moral problems that do exist, but that as parents and leaders we will also resolve to qualify and pledge ourselves to be living examples of Christlike virtues, that we may be able to give wise, helpful, and understanding counsel and direction to youth in the process of growing up.

I pray that maturity will find each of them morally clean, sound in the faith, prepared and worthy for the sacred ordinances and choice blessings of God's holy temples.

I also pray, my brothers and sisters, that as leaders we shall give consideration to the problems of youth, to the need of doing something constructive that will help them to understand life, gain a knowledge and a testimony of the gospel that will carry them over difficult ground into a life of joy and happiness, and this I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We have a note that says that when we sustained the presidency of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association of the Church, inadvertently Sister Reeder's first name was given as "Martha." Whether it was "Martha" or "Mary," we sustain unanimously Sister Bertha S. Reeder as president of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association.

We have a report of all but fourteen of the eighty-one halls in which the priesthood meeting was broadcast last night. The actual count of those in attendance totals 27,966. On the basis of those in attendance last April at the places that have not reported, the committee estimates an additional 1785 people, making a total of 29,752 members of the priesthood in attendance last evening. Thank you.