

### Elder Spencer W. Kimball Of the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brothers and sisters and especially the youth: The song "O My Father" has been traditional in the Kimball family since I was an infant. My grandfather, Heber C. Kimball, was buried, I believe, from this Tabernacle and it was sung then. It was beautifully sung today. I think I have never heard it sung more reverently.

In his impressive opening sermon on Thursday, President David O. McKay spoke with feeling of "the threatening dangers that are clearly on the horizon," and he sounded a warning to young people who "in their yearning for a good time are often tempted to indulge in the things that appeal to the baser side of humanity."

#### Valiant youth will surmount vexations

This world of youth is full of temptations and snares and booby traps. It is not wholly different from earlier worlds, but these problems to solve and situations to meet seem to be accentuated.

There are the usual rebellions and temptations of the ages; but today, the urges manifest themselves in new forms. The car with its privacy and possible distances has multiplied the possibilities of evil. The revolution on the campus has unleashed new demands for the so-called freedoms of thought and of action. There are marches and riots against restraint and limitation.

Many youth have exhausted the usual pleasures that seemed to satisfy their predecessors; and now, in their boredom, they demand new experiences they call "kicks," which often run into hazardous, immoral, indecent activities, bringing destruction to body and mind and soul.

The so-called "new morality" is but the old immorality in a new setting, except perhaps less restrained, less inhibited. Freedom of sex, freedom to drink and smoke, and freedom to rebel and march—all come into the picture. Such evils as glue sniffing and LSD

are taking their toll, and narcotics are introduced by dope pushers to unsuspecting youth. Mugging, brutality, and many other aberrations—all come in turn supposedly to relieve boredom as new "kicks." All these and more fester themselves like a leech upon unprotected folks, later to become the tyrannical master. The simple experiment becomes a complex habit; the embryo becomes a giant; the little innovation becomes a dictator; and the person becomes the slave with a ring in his nose. The so-called freedom becomes abject slavery.

I am happy that the great majority of our youth are stalwart; but realizing that evil is everywhere present and the evil one eager to tempt our finest youth, we are obligated to broadcast a warning to those who will listen.

As an example of the increasing pressures of youth to fall prey to the sins of the world, we quote the statement of Wallace Sterling, president of Leland Stanford University. He says that "since May, students over 21 have been allowed to drink alcoholic beverages in campus residences. . . . A five-year study of student development at Stanford has shown that for more than three out of four students, drinking is well established . . . even at the time they enter Stanford and . . . is apparently sanctioned by their peers, their parents, and society." (*School and Society*, October 29, 1966.)

Paul warns against the "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12.)

Many fine young persons have been trapped by evil, little realizing that they are in danger—like standing on a crumbling ledge.

I am indebted to my good friend, Jim Smith, formerly of central Arizona, who told me the following story:

"Long years ago when I was a little boy and rode the range with the men, tending the cattle and helping with the roundup, I used to look forward to the 'rest stop' under the wide spreading

branches of a most beautiful tree on Ash Creek.

"How we used to enjoy it and admire it with its uniform shape and its thick green foliage! How we came to look forward to it, depend on it, and almost love it as we came to think of it as our very own, having been planted there for our comfort and to satisfy our needs.

"Its green coolness was a haven of protection for the birds that made their nests in its branches and perched upon the outer twigs for their chorus rehearsals.

"The cattle sought out its cool shade and the soft, pulverized, unrocky ground under it for their afternoon relaxation.

"And we thirsty cowboys always made a stop to get a cool drink from the canteen, perhaps to play mumble-peg for a few minutes, and to stretch our tired, cramped limbs for a few moments as we rested from the hot summer Arizona sun.

"As we lay on the soft cool earth on our backs and looked up into the tree, we saw high in one of the limbs a little sprig of mistletoe. It stood out in contrast from the gray leafage of the tree and was not unattractive in its dark green dress with its little whitish berries.

"I imagined I could hear the gigantic tree saying to the little mistletoe, 'Ha! little friend! Welcome to stay with me. In my great strength, I can easily spare you a little of my sap, which I create from the sun and air and the water under the creek bed. There is plenty for all, and you in your smallness can do me no harm!'"

### **If strength is not consumed by parasites**

My friend Smith continues:

"Years later when I was a man, I again came up Ash Creek, again driving cattle. Imagine my consternation and sadness to find the beautiful tree of my adoration dry and dead, its long jagged branches reaching high like the bony fingers of a skeleton. Not even an uninhabited bird nest graced its forks, no cattle lazed under its branches, no foliage covered its grim nakedness, and no welcome was there

to traveler or cowboy to take shelter under its nude wretchedness, and already its limbs were being hacked away by woodcutters.

"The infinitely beautiful tree of my youth was now the ugliest tree on Ash Creek."

In seeking for the cause of such devastation, I saw hanging from the limbs of the tree great clusters of mistletoe—the parasite of the tree. The translucent glutinous berries perhaps had been carried by a bird or the wind. The stickiness of the berry served to attach it to the tree limb or host plant until germination was complete, the little sprout always turning toward the point of attachment.

And as I pondered, this thought came to me: Who would ever dream that a sticky little white mistletoe berry would overpower and kill a huge, beautiful tree? How like the little mistletoe is the first cigarette or first drink! How like this predatory plant is the first lie or dishonest act! How like this parasitic growth is the first crime, the first immoral act!

This particular group of youth little dreamed that an insignificant little bottle could finally destroy a mighty soul. It was for kicks, they said, that they took the alcoholic beverage with them to the party. They felt they had proved they were mature and not "chicken." Future parties and associations seemed to be weak without it. It came to be a regular thing, a lift from boredom, and an escape from depressions, a hideout from problems.

How could these young people know except through advice and counsel from others that the bottle was a demon, that it would become master, that like the mistletoe it would take over and bleed the host?

How could these youth know with their first drink that it would become a habit, a part of them? How could they believe the parasite would waste their precious needed money, break up their homes, rob them of their self-respect, or cause numberless accidental deaths, create worlds of unhappiness, and destroy the mighty soul?

Neither the tree nor the little carrier bird could possibly know that the waxy, sticky little mistletoe seed would

Saturday, April 8

Second Day

kill the mighty ash. But the youth who begins to drink can know that eventual destruction and loss face him if he lets this drinking become a habit, for he or she is a child of God, created in his image, born of royal blood to become a king or queen.

I worked with such a person who in his youth laughed at the thought that he might become involved beyond his powers. He scoffed at the suggestion that he was losing his power of resistance—almost insulted at the suggestion that he was fast becoming a slave to a merciless, tyrannical master, but I heard him one day in sober moments curse himself and cry out, "What a waste of everything good! How senseless. How stupid!"

I pondered again: How like the little mistletoe was the abominable practice of cheating, the first little dishonest act! This particular boy died in the gas chamber, a cigarette between his lips. He had stood tall like the tree on Ash Creek. He had been clean, honorable, and loved but had become barren, desolate, and a menace to society, untrusted, unloved. It had begun with cheating, a little seductive vice no bigger than a mistletoe branch, no stickier than a mistletoe berry. Cheating was done in games and in school lessons. There were little inconsequential misappropriations, followed by thefts, small and larger, which finally ran into armed robberies, to killing, and to the gas chamber.

Whoever suggested that the little white sweet berry was tasteless or the mistletoe without color? How else would it attract? How else would it be propagated and spread? Whoever said that sin was not fun? Whoever claimed that Lucifer was not handsome, persuasive, easy, friendly? Whoever said that sin was unattractive, undesirable, or nauseating in its acceptance?

### Transgression a delusion and a snare

Transgression wears elegant gowns and sparkling apparel. It is highly perfumed, has attractive features, a soft voice. It is found in educated circles and sophisticated groups. It pro-

vides sweet and comfortable luxuries. Sin is easy and has a big company of bed fellows. It promises immunity from restrictions, temporary freedoms. It can momentarily satisfy hunger, thirst, desire, urges, passions, wants, without immediately paying the price. But, it begins tiny and grows to monumental proportions. It grows drop by drop, inch by inch.

It is doubtful if Cain had murder in his heart when his first jealous thought crossed his mind, when the first hate began to develop; but ounce by ounce, moment by moment, the little parasite developed to rob him of his strength, his balance, and his peace. The evil took over, and Cain, like the tree, changed his appearance, his attitudes, his life, and became a world wanderer, vicious and desolate.

How like the first cigarette is the predatory mistletoe plant! Just on a sneaking dare, or to avoid a momentary embarrassment, or to be "smart," or to be accepted, or for nebulous other foolish reasons, the first cigarette is often taken.

Certainly, the novice has no idea of becoming a chain smoker or dying of lung cancer. Surely, he can control. There can be no habit—he assures himself—he is master, but time and habit and repetition take a terrible toll.

A bird or the wind or other carrier transports the tiny berry to a tree; it sticks to the limb and grows to suck the life's sap blood from the tree and eventually leaves the giant dead and dry.

The single cigarette multiplies from one to a dozen, to a hundred, yes, to a thousand, to an almost uncontrollable habit.

"Can you quit?" I asked a tobacco addict. "Can you abandon the weed before you are 'hooked'?"

The big man laughed. "Of course," he replied and said, as did the great tree on Ash Creek figuratively say, "Ah, little weed, I am not afraid of you. You are insignificant. I am strong."

And then years after, I heard him say, in disgust, "I cannot break the habit. I am its slave. How stupid of me!"

### Blights which kill

How like the mistletoe is immorality. The killer plant starts with a sticky sweet berry. Once rooted, it sticks and grows—a leaf, a branch, a plant. It never starts mature and full grown. It is always transplanted an infant.

Nor does immorality begin in adultery or perversion. Those are full-grown adults. Little indiscretions are the berries—indiscretions like sex thoughts, sex discussions, passionate kissing, pornography. The leaves and little twigs are masturbation and necking and such, growing with every exercise.

The full-grown plant is petting and sex looseness. It confounds, frustrates, and destroys like the parasite if it is not cut out and destroyed, for, in time, it robs the tree, bleeds its life, and leaves it barren and dry; and, strangely enough, the parasite dies with its host.

Each seemingly small indiscretion seems powerless as compared to the sturdy body, the strong mind, the sweet spirit of the youth who gives way to the first temptation and who might, like the majestic tree, say: "Ha, little weed, little bottle! I can take you between my lips without harm. I'll look smart and be a good fellow with the

crowd. Ha, little indiscretion! You are weak—I am strong. I can discard you at my pleasure."

But years later, I see him once again, and what a change! The strong has become weak; the master, the slave; his spiritual growth curtailed; he has isolated himself from the Church with all its uplifting influences. Has he not suffered a kind of spiritual death, leaving him like the tree—a mere skeleton of what he might have been?

If the first unrighteous act is never given root and the mistletoe never permitted to lodge, the tree will grow to beautiful maturity and life toward God, our Father.

May our youth and all others fortify themselves against the insidious evils of the world that overpower and destroy, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President Hugh B. Brown

Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Elder Robert L. Simpson, first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the First Council of Seventy.

### Elder Robert L. Simpson

#### Of the Presiding Bishopric

During the past few weeks, most of us have either participated in or listened as some rather serious commitments were made. With a group of eager young Scouts, it was: "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country." These boys were committing themselves to a better effort.

At a patriotic rally recently, a group of us earnestly vowed a pledge of allegiance to the flag of our country. Every citizen, whatever his nationality, makes strong commitments to uphold and honor his government. This is as it should be.

Few, if any, go through life without committing themselves to a sacred trust and promise of one type or another. In proper perspective and with lofty and worthy objectives, such covenants

can and should be stimulating, motivational, and indeed a most stabilizing influence among men.

But any and all social or civil promises, commitments, and oaths entered into by man with man fade into relative insignificance when compared with those promises and covenants between man and God, the Eternal Father. Could any commitment be more important than a sacred covenant between mortal man and his Maker?

A long, long time ago—yes, even before the foundations of this earth were laid—the plan was clear; the process for the successful undertaking of building souls for eternal purposes was established. The covenant procedure was decided upon as an essential element to that end.