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Of the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends: In my heart I am fully convinced that more attention must be given to matching gospel principles, standards, and ideals with Christlike examples in our personal lives if truth and righteousness are to prevail in the present decaying moral and spiritual world. We cannot afford to depart from solid spiritual moorings and stumble down an evil course that can only lead to depravity of life.

The world needs more men and women of good moral and spiritual character who will stand firm, steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of God and be living examples of truth and righteousness.

The power of example

The power of example exhibits its strength when men and women live the gospel. For such persons, the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ shines forth from their countenance as a beacon light to draw others into virtue's path.

Recently, returning home by plane from a stake conference, a young stewardess, off duty, sat down beside me. After introduction, she informed me that one of her roommates is a girl from Salt Lake City. I asked if the roommate belonged to the Mormon Church. She answered, "Yes." I inquired if she lived her religion. Again the answer was a positive yes. She expressed admiration and respect for the faith, behavior, and good example of her newfound Mormon friend.

A wise man, when asked to list three cardinal points that exemplified the lives of the great teachers of all time and that would be a guide to new teachers, said: "First, teach by example. Second, teach by example. Third, teach by example."

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the greatest example the world has ever known, and his teachings endure throughout the ages because the precepts he taught were emphasized by the example of his own life.

To be an example from a religious point of view, someone or some group must serve as a model and set a pattern of conduct and moral behavior in life that can safely be imitated and followed by others with benefit and blessing to them. "No period of history has ever been great or ever can be that does not act on some sort of high, idealistic motives, and idealism in our time has been shoved aside, and we are paying the penalty for it." (Alfred North Whitehead.)

High-sounding thoughts and words without an appropriate example are as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, therefore meaningless.

"What you are," said Emerson, "thunders so loudly in my ears, I cannot hear what you say."

"I am the light"

". . . Behold," said Jesus, "I am the light; I have set an example for you." (3 Ne. 18:16.)

This challenging statement by our Redeemer can be taken at face value with safety and assurance.

The apostle Peter emphasized this truth when he declared: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Pet. 2:21-23.)

It has been said, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried." (Gilbert K. Chesterton.)

Value of good example

To the members of the Church today are applicable the words of our Savior: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good

works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16.)

This scripture stresses the importance and value of good example.

President David O. McKay, in a general conference message, gave this counsel: "If we would face the future, no matter what it may be, with calmness of spirit, with an assurance that God governs in the affairs of men, let us as individuals and as a group live exemplary lives." (*The Improvement Era*, May 1948, p. 338.)

This plea from our beloved President is as timely today as it was 21 years ago, and perhaps more so, because of today's increased wickedness and pervasive corruptness.

Gospel standards and ideals

The Prophet Joseph Smith proclaimed that people should be taught correct principles and then govern themselves. The gospel teaches correct principles, standards, and ideals, but there are so many who disregard these teachings, and thus fail to rightly govern themselves. In keeping with this concept of teaching correct principles, the Lord warned the inhabitants of his kingdom:

"And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself." (D&C 105:5.)

Nephi, a Book of Mormon prophet, being grieved by the hardness of the hearts of his older brothers Laman and Lemuel, spake unto them, saying:

"Behold, ye are mine elder brethren, and how is it that ye are so hard in your hearts, and so blind in your minds, that ye have need that I, your younger brother, should speak unto you, yea, and set an example for you?

"How is it that ye have not hearkened unto the word of the Lord?

"... Wherefore, let us be faithful to him." (1 Ne. 7:8-9, 12.)

"Follow thou me"

We learn in the writings of Nephi that Christ "humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.

"And . . . it showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.

"And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren," said Nephi, "can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?"

And, challenged the Christ to all mankind, ". . . follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do." (2 Ne. 31:7, 9-10, 12.)

This admonition was confirmed to Nephi by the voice of God, saying:

"Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

"And now, my beloved brethren," said Nephi, "I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved." (2 Ne. 31:15-16.)

These teachings constitute a summons to all men to live righteously. It is the only path that leads one back to the presence of God.

Men believe what they see

Corianton, son of a Nephite prophet, while engaged in missionary service, foolishly, and to the great sorrow of his father, followed after the harlot Isabel. Alma, disappointed by his son's actions, reproved him and said:

"... for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words." (Al. 39:11.)

Truly, example is greater than precept.

Billy Martin, the new manager of the Minnesota Twins baseball team, is quoted as saying: "We represent the state of Minnesota, and I want us to look like gentlemen. . . . The youth of America is watching, and I am concerned about that. I want our guys to be a good example." I thought that statement was a very interesting observation.

The writer Thoreau philosophized: "If you would convince a man that he does wrong, do right. Men will believe what they see—*let them see.*"

Dr. Albert Schweitzer expressed this thought: "Example is not the main thing in influencing others—it is the only thing!"

"There is a transcendent power in example. We reform others unconsciously when we walk uprightly." (Madame Swetchine.)

Parental example

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, speaking to parents, counseled: "... ye shall remember your children, how that ye have grieved their hearts because of the example that ye have set before them; and also, remember that ye may, because of your filthiness, bring your children unto destruction, and their sins be heaped upon your heads at the last day." (Jac. 3:10.)

This reminds us of the teachings of our Lord to parents in this latter day: the responsibility we have of teaching our children the principles of the gospel—to see that they are baptized, taught to pray, to walk uprightly before the Lord, and to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy. (See D&C 68: 27-29.)

President McKay declared: "It is as futile to attempt to teach honesty, and to act dishonestly before a child, as to attempt to heat water in a sieve." (*Pathways to Happiness*, p. 307.)

How important it is for parents to live clean lives and obey God's laws and commandments. To do so will permit them to use the example of their own lives in the teaching of their children. To fail to do so creates personal inhibitions that prevent parents from discussing intimate and delicate questions and problems about life with which their children are deeply concerned.

Children gain balance, judgment, and wisdom on the foundation and platforms of their exemplary parents.

The prophet Jacob again admonished the Nephites:

"... Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. . . ." (Jac. 2:35.)

In President David O. McKay's

message this morning, he gave timely advice to parents regarding their children.

Brigham Young's Counsel

May I share with you President Brigham Young's counsel for parents to teach their children by example. Said President Young: "... if parents will continually set before their children examples worthy of their imitation and the approval of our Father in heaven, they will turn the current, and the tide of feelings of their children, and they, eventually, will desire righteousness more than evil." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 14, p. 195.)

"... we should never permit ourselves to do anything that we are not willing to see our children do. We should set them an example that we wish them to imitate. . . . How often we see parents demand obedience, good behavior, kind words, pleasant looks, a sweet voice and a bright eye from a child or children, when they themselves are full of bitterness and scolding! How inconsistent and unreasonable this is!" (*Ibid.*, p. 192.)

"... parents should govern their children by faith rather than by the rod, leading them kindly by good example into all truth and holiness." (*JD*, Vol. 12, p. 174.)

"Our children will have the love of the truth, if we but live our religion. Parents should take that course that their children can say, 'I never knew my father to deceive or take advantage of a neighbor; I never knew my father to take to himself that which did not belong to him . . . but he said, . . . "be honest, true, virtuous, kind, industrious, prudent and full of good works."' Such teachings from parents to their children will abide with them for ever." (*JD*, Vol. 14, p. 195.)

Examples from scripture

Speaking of examples from the scriptures, the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian saints, admonished:

"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

"Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed. . . .

"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition. . . .

"Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:6, 8-12.)

Those who teach or lead in God's kingdom must remember that Christ is the great exemplar to them, and rightly so. Therefore, all leaders and teachers called to labor in his vineyard accept a great responsibility when they expect others to live up to gospel principles, standards, and ideals in order to enjoy the privileges and blessings of the gospel, yet fail themselves to maintain these requirements in their own personal lives.

Responsibility of leaders

We leaders must be what we ask or require others to be; otherwise, such hypocrisy turns to our condemnation.

The candidate before baptism is required to repent of all his sins. Does it not seem reasonable that the priesthood brethren officiating in this ordinance be equally free from all personal transgressions? This also holds true in the performance of all gospel ordinances.

It is deceitful and dishonorable for one to try to hide his own improper personal conduct and not serve openly and exemplarily according to the spirit of his holy calling. We must remember that a heavenly record is kept of our conduct here on earth, and there will come a day of reckoning and judgment. This church is true; it has value and is meaningful to those seeking exaltation and eternal life. If this church is worth anything, it is worth everything! There is no exaltation and eternal glory without it.

Lord's power over his saints

Before the second coming of our Lord, he has revealed that the devil is to have power over his own dominion. We are witnessing evidences of it today

in many forms. Men are setting aside the accepted eternal teachings and verities of scripture. Many intellectuals in this present enlightened age think they have outgrown the basic and fundamental principles that the Savior and his holy prophets have stressed throughout the ages of time. Even though in this latter day, "the devil shall have power over his own dominion," the Lord has promised he "shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon . . . the world." (D&C 1:35-36.)

This knowledge is comforting, but for the Savior to fulfill this promise, his people must live as saints. They are the only ones among whom the Lord promises to reign.

Perhaps it would be well to remember the account of Enoch and his people. They were in an abominable state of wickedness. They had all gone astray from the teachings of their fathers. Enoch accepted the challenge of turning the people from their evil ways unto the Lord. He did it so effectively that God translated and received them unto himself. (See Moses 7 and 8.)

From wickedness to righteousness

Following Christ's ministry and resurrection in Judea, he visited the inhabitants of the Americas. After his appearance among them, they completely changed their ways from wickedness to righteousness.

Fourth Nephi records this sublime condition:

"And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land . . . and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.

"And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

"And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among

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all the people who had been created by the hand of God." (4 Ne. 2, 15-16.)

These two examples are before us in the Church today. Our work and purpose is just the same now as it was in earlier times. I wonder if we will so live and do as to measure up to this responsibility. The task seems insurmountable, but if we, as a people, live righteously, seeking earnestly the riches of eternity, the ideal state of righteousness can be achieved.

Return to evil ways

After this period of Nephite and Lamanite happiness and peace, they gradually fell again into evil ways, and Mormon, in his second epistle to his son Moroni, stressed the wickedness and lack of principle in his people and lamented:

"O the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy. . . .

"And they have become strong in their perversion; and they are alike brutal, sparing none, . . . and they delight in everything save that which is good. . . .

"... Behold, thou knowest the wickedness of this people; thou knowest that they are without principle, and past feeling. . . ." (Moro. 9:18-20.)

Is history beginning to repeat itself in this generation of time? I firmly believe it is. Our position and responsibility are the same now as Mormon expressed to his son Moroni centuries ago:

"And now, my beloved son," said Mormon, "notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God." (Moro. 9:6.)

Striving to exert the power of good example by living gospel principles, maintaining proper standards, and holding firm to righteous ideals, while not always easy, will reward us in this life and in the eternal worlds to come.

Our obligation and challenge

Someone said: "It is no trick to keep

one's principles on a high level, but it is hard sometimes to stay up there with them."

"For us, with the rule of right and wrong given us by Christ, there is nothing for which we have no standard. . . ." (Leo Tolstoi, *War and Peace*.)

Honesty, integrity, uprightness, morality, observance of the Word of Wisdom, and all the revelations concerning ideal behavior should be exemplified in our own lives, and we will then become proper examples for others to follow.

Does our pattern of life incorporate these basic qualities that permit us to say with assurance to our loved ones and friends, and those whom we serve, "Come follow me, and do the things you have seen me do"?

Here is our obligation, duty, and challenge.

May God bless us, brothers and sisters, that we may have the strength and the courage under all conditions to live exemplary lives and to walk uprightly before the Lord and set a good example for all mankind to follow, and particularly to our own children and families, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

The semi-annual conference of the Deseret Sunday School Union will be held this evening, Friday, at 7:30 in the Tabernacle. This is a change from the traditional Sunday evening session which will not be held. All Sunday School workers will wish to be in attendance.

Under the direction of the First Presidency there will be a Welfare-Agricultural meeting held in the Assembly Hall tomorrow, Saturday, at 7:30 a.m. Invited to attend this special session are Regional Representatives, stake presidencies, bishoprics, high councilors, Project Operating Committees, stake and ward Relief Society presidents and Welfare coordinators.

The singing for this session has been furnished by the University of Utah Institute of Religion Chorus under the