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The past few days my thoughts have turned repeatedly to that great message of strength, "... for I, the Lord, love him [Hyrum Smith] because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me. . . ." (D&C 124:15.) What a blessing it is to be one who loves that which is right.

### The highway of compromise

There seems to be a tendency among many of us in our society today to live by compromise, rationalization, comparison, and self-justification. Love of right has been replaced by love of acceptance and convenience. Some mistakenly think the pathway of safety is somewhere between the path of righteousness and the road to destruction. Others seem to have convinced themselves that the way to perfection is reached by traveling the highway of compromise.

The other day a mother referred to the conduct of her college-age son with a mild tone of satisfaction when she said, "He may not do any studying, but at least he isn't participating in campus riots." An inmate of a prison, being confined because of a burglary sentence, seemed to have a ring of status in his voice when he pointed to another prisoner and said, "At least I'm not as bad as that guy. He's in here for second degree murder." A shoplifter seemed to feel she was only mildly dishonest because she was caught taking a hat while others have been convicted of stealing dresses. What kind of thinking is exhibited when someone is heard to say, "I may burn up a couple of packages of cigarettes a day, but I'm not on drugs"?

### Pressures to conform

The pressures of the world upon the young and old alike to conform

and experiment are real and mounting. Many of us are startled today when we are made aware of the fact that there are drug users even among the twelve- to thirteen-year-old group. What should be more shocking are the tactics being used to talk our youth into trying drugs. I have learned from youth who are entangled in this vicious pastime that approaches such as the following are being widely used: "Drugs are a fun escape from the lousy world in which you must live," "Drugs are a friend to the lonely," "Drugs will give you that mature and self-sufficient image so much desired," "Drugs are a people substitute."

I wish to declare, with all the forcefulness I possess, that these damaging approaches are of the evil one. Young people are being led to believe that the "trips" drugs take them on are the safe, "in" way to travel between pious righteousness and destruction.

Drugs are causing many of our young people to drop out before they start. Drugs rob an individual of his sense of values. Drug-tampering youth are playing copycat in a subculture element.

### Focus on cause of problems

May I recommend, as we look at drug abuse or other social problems, that we focus on the cause rather than the symptoms.

When a youth asks the question of himself or a friend, "Why shouldn't I take drugs?" he is very possibly asking the wrong question. What he may really want to know and need to know is "Why should I want to take any kind of a stimulant or depressant at all? What is there in my life that I am unhappy enough about to want to escape into a diabolic world of illusion?" If we as parents and friends

advise our youth that drugs are bad, evil, and immoral, and yet we do not try to understand why our youth turn to this evil substitute for reality, then the drugs themselves become the issue and not the symptom of the greater issue of unhappiness. We need to know why our loved ones want to run from their present life to the unknown yet dangerous life of addiction. What causes a strong, lovely, vibrant young person to allow a chemical to control his or her behavior? What is there at home, school, work, or church that is so uncomfortable that an escape seems necessary?

### Stability in the home

If we were not faced with the evils of marijuana, LSD, speed, and heroin, we would be faced with some other type of escape mechanism, because some of us as brothers, sisters, parents, friends, and teachers have not yet been able to reach our youth in such a way as to give them the confidence and love they seek. Some of us are not providing the stability in the home, the respect, and the care that every person needs. They need more than Church upbringing—they need a loving home life.

Where better can we teach our young people a love for the right than in a happy home situation? Our young people will not want a "people substitute" if we provide a home atmosphere with loving personal relationships, where a mother, father, sisters, and brothers really care.

Parents, let's make certain our youth are not continually exposed to the idea that the stresses of daily life require chemical relief. Factual information about drugs should be constantly stressed rather than attempts to frighten or shame. We must try to rear our children so that they are neither deprived of affection nor spoiled. We must give our children responsibilities according to their capabilities and never overprotect

them from the difficulties they will encounter. As sure as some adults—mothers and fathers—continue to sow the wind, they will reap the tornado. Let us more firmly entrench ourselves in the true purposes of family life and sow oneness and reap joy.

### God's ways bring happiness

When temptations and challenges come there will be painful, trying times not only for our youth but also for their parents. Yet then, more than ever, it is imperative that there be love, understanding, and acceptance in the home so our youth can learn that only steadfast pursuit of God's ways will bring a rich, happy life.

It is time for us to reaffirm the great truth that God's paths are straight. They not only provide safety, but they also lead to happiness and eternal progression.

### Staying on straight paths

Speaking of staying on the straight paths, I will never forget an experience I had with a friend in central Utah a few years ago. He had for his hobby mountain lion hunting. With other associates, dependable horses, guns, and well-trained dogs, he would seek to track the lions down, or tree them for capture. One day when I visited his place of business, he had a full-grown hunting dog tied to one of his sheds. "Isn't he a beauty!" I commented. He responded with "He's got to go. I can't be bothered with him." "What's the problem?" I continued.

"Since he was a pup, I have trained him to track lions. He knows what I expect. The last time we were out on a three-day hunt, he took off after a deer, then a coyote, and finally some rabbits, and was gone the best part of a full day. He knows he must stay on the trail of the lion to be one of mine. Our business is mountain lions. Yep, he's for sale pretty cheap."

How often are we led from the right track by distractions like drugs

that cross our paths? Do we sometimes seek the available "rabbit" when the big game is available up the path?

### Severity of drug problem

The drug problem is severe today, and the Church is deeply concerned. Families, parents, and Church officers should do all possible to prevent or treat these evils. The rise of drug use is almost a subsociety within the larger worldwide society. People, young and old, who are part of the drug scene tend to adopt unusual dress, hair styles, and other mannerisms which set them apart. But unless they become offensive or unacceptable by reason of extreme behavior, we do only harm by rejecting them from our meetings and general fellowship. It is hoped that we will avoid the pitfall of giving excessive publicity to wrongdoers at the expense of the majority who live virtuous lives.

At the same time, we must not react with panic to what is a symptom of greater illness. In fact, there are indications that we have saturated the youth in and out of the Church with information on drugs. We have unintentionally taught them how and where to obtain drugs by our massive campaigns.

### Church support

The Church recognizes and supports the efforts of reputable people and organizations who are attempting to combat and treat drug problems. Bishops and other priesthood leaders should help drug users find resources of cure and rehabilitation.

When people are curious and tampering with drugs, we should help to strengthen their homes and personal lives through warm, loving reeducation around basic gospel principles. Our youth are looking for purposeful leadership. We need to lead the lost back from where they are. We must teach the others to continue to choose the right and stay on His paths.

May I reiterate that while drugs

are a most serious problem, and while the Church is a flexible instrument in the Lord's hands, we must not be diverted from our eternal and most effective course by problems that, though serious, are only symptoms of greater ills.

### Love for the right

Lofty standards of behavior will always be based upon a love for the right. Wickedness in any form will never lead to happiness. We must be aware of those who would have us believe there is no heaven, there is no hell, and that the only road to happiness is marked with compromise and convenience. Satan is real and he is effective. Drug abuse is one of his tools. He would throw men down, and by his cunning he would have all mankind strangers to God. Let us not be deceived. God lives, and through him and with him we can accomplish all things. We must not permit ourselves to become entangled in the sin of drugs or the sin of compromising our standards, but rather we must learn to avoid all the ways of Satan.

Our Heavenly Father is so concerned that we do right that he will bless each of us with a sign, if we will ask his counsel. Do we realize that the Lord has promised us a physical manifestation if we but ask him to direct us in the right? In the ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 8, we have this commitment from the Lord:

"But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right."

### The Lord's help promised

Brothers and sisters, we compromise our blessings, we rationalize ourselves out of the sure and safe way, when we do not ask our God to guide us in the decisions that are part of our daily lives.

The Lord has promised that he will help us in our pursuit of happiness if we will trust in him and follow his path. The abundant life will be ours if we rely on his strength. If we will magnify the priesthood we hold and share our talents every day, Satan will have no power over us, and our Heavenly Father's strength will make all righteous things possible. Ammon, in his comments to his brother Aaron in the twenty-sixth chapter of Alma, verse 12, points to a way of life that brings security: "Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; . . . for which we will praise his name forever." All we need to do to enjoy eternal, happy lives is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Failure when we give up**

Following one of our recent general conference sessions, a troubled mother approached me and said, "I need to know what is meant by the statement, 'No success can compensate for failure in the home.'" Knowing a little of the burdens this friend of mine carries in her mind and heart because of a rebellious, wayward daughter, I shared this meaning with her: I believe we start to fail in the home when we give up on each other. We have not failed until we have quit trying. As long as we are working diligently with love, patience, and long-suffering, despite the odds or the apparent lack of progress, we are not classified as failures in the home. We only start to fail when we give up on a son, daughter, mother, or father.

### **There is a way back**

A few days ago, I had the pleasurable assignment of visiting some of our Lamanite friends in Supai, at the base of the Grand Canyon, in Arizona. While on the canyon trails, I

had the opportunity of visiting with some hippie-type young people who had traveled to that secluded area in their search for escape. Drugs and a basic desire to get away from everyone and everything, according to their own admissions, prodded them on to this area and yet other areas when this one becomes routine. "No one cares about us, and frankly, we don't care about the establishment" is the message they left with me; however, I assure you these were not the exact words they used. As I told one young man, and I share this same thought with our other young friends who are at present involved in the drug habit, "As surely as you can walk out of this Grand Canyon in three to four hours with all of your worldly possessions strapped to your back, you can walk out on this drug habit. There are a lot of us who care about you and would like to help you back up the trail to the main highway."

To our young friends and bewildered parents caught in the vicious grip of drug abuse and its heartaches, we declare to you that there is a way back. You can make it. There is hope.

### **Pathways of safety**

I bear witness to you this day that a love for that which is right will bring us our Heavenly Father's strength and protection. In his paths we will find security. My prayer is that we will have the desire in our hearts to earnestly seek the pathways of safety from evils such as drugs by honestly keeping all of his commandments.

As we unitedly work to help our youth in combatting and avoiding all of the temptations of the day, may we be reminded, ". . . let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (Jas. 1:19-20.) I pray for our Heavenly Father to help us teach and love that which is right, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■