

are not products of their own lives, but of what their parents give them. If we can get parents to set a good example, we will take away the greatest stumbling block between generations."

The Lord said: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6.)

Cure for social ailments

We must learn, before it is too late, the truth spoken by Elder Richard L. Evans: "There never was a tonic that would cure more social ailments than a healthy, happy home. There never was a greater source of social stability than an affectionate and understanding family. There never was a better way of helping children to happiness than the close confidence of wise and loving and responsible parents." (*From Within These Walls* [New York: Harper & Bros., 1959], p. 191.)

I was reared in a home of wise, loving, and responsible parents. I was reared in a home where a sweet mother was always awake when I

came home, like Brother Dunn's parents. There was always an opportunity to report and to talk. These sessions are some of my choicest memories. In that home was nurtured the testimony that I bear you today. I know that God lives; that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know that President Joseph Fielding Smith is a living prophet today, with the keys of the kingdom. I know that if we will follow the counsel we have been given in this conference, our homes will be better, our service more effective, and our joy more full. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy has just addressed us.

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Sterling W. Sill

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

Some time ago, I heard a great businessman give an interesting success formula. He said that when contemplating any accomplishment, one of the first steps to be taken was to definitely decide on those things that should *not* be done under any circumstances. That is, if one were going into business, there are certain dishonest practices and improper procedures that should definitely and permanently be ruled out of bounds in advance. Or in planning a happy

marriage, there are infidelities and disloyalties that must *never* be entertained. When one has definitely eliminated those things that he will *not* do, then he can concentrate all of his time and energy on the things that he *should* do.

Making firm decisions

But we always run into a great deal of trouble when we fail to make firm and lasting decisions to govern important matters. A psychiatrist once

said to a mental patient, "Do you ever have any trouble making up your mind?" The mental patient said, "Well, yes and no." A yes-and-no person is a weak person. An undecided person makes far more than his share of mistakes.

Recently a man seeking help with a moral problem was asked, "What are you going to do about the next temptation?" He answered, "How can I tell until I know what the temptation will be?" If this man can't favorably make up his mind even while suffering his regrets, what chance will he have when his desires are again inflamed by his evil? Certainly we place a serious handicap upon ourselves when we neglect to definitely make up our minds about those important questions of morality, honesty, integrity, industry, and religion.

Things not to do

One of the best illustrations of this procedure for outlawing failure in advance was employed by the Lord himself as he tried to make ancient Israel into the greatest nation on the earth. Three months after they were released from their Egyptian bondage, they were encamped before Mount Sinai. Then God gave them the Ten Commandments, which included a list of things that they just must not do under any circumstances. For even God himself could not make a great nation out of a group of murderers, liars, thieves, atheists, adulterers, and Sabbath breakers.

The kind of emphasis

Apparently the Lord tried to make his presentation as memorable as possible, which recalls the story of the chief engineer of a certain company whose services had been dispensed with. He asked the president why he

had been dismissed. The president said, "You let us make a mistake which cost us a lot of money." The engineer replied, "But certainly you must remember that I specifically advised you *not* to do that." The president replied, "Yes, I remember that you advised us *not* to do it, but you didn't pound the table when you advised us."

The kind of emphasis that is given to an idea is sometimes about as important as the idea itself. Recently a minister on the radio said that he never talked about the Ten Commandments in his church anymore because they were too far out of date. He also said that their language was too harsh for the weak sensibilities of our day. This minister felt that instead of using such strong terms as *command* and *Thou shalt not*, the Lord should have employed some softer words such as *I recommend* or *I suggest* or *I advise*. But soft words frequently produce soft attitudes with weak meanings and built-in violations.

Thou shalt not

We know that the destructive permissiveness of our present day causes some of our most serious sins. But the Lord allowed no permissiveness to get into the Ten Commandments. He came down onto the Mount in a cloud of fire from which the smoke ascended as from a furnace. He came with such power that the mountain quaked and the people themselves trembled. Then, to the accompaniment of the lightnings and thunders of that sacred mountain, God gave the people their basic law and listed some of those things that they must not do. He said:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet. (Exod. 20:3-4, 7-8, 12-17.)

Importance of Ten Commandments

These sixty-seven words can be read in less than thirty seconds, and yet if they were followed, they would quickly transform our earth into God's paradise. But we not only disobey these important laws; many people don't even know what they are. One man once said to his friend, "I will give you five dollars if you can repeat any one of the Ten Commandments." His friend accepted the challenge and proceeded to demonstrate his knowledge by saying, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." His friend said, "Here's the money. I didn't think that you could do it."

But because we are breaking the Ten Commandments, the Ten Commandments are also breaking us. We are fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel, who said: "... the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. 18:4.) Sin is more than ordinarily important, for as Martin Luther once said, "One vice can overcome ten virtues."

Cancelling virtues

A banker may be able to cancel off one liability with an asset of equal

size, but you can't do that in the more important accounting of life, as several great virtues can all be made unusable by one vice. Recently, three men were being discussed for an important assignment. Of one it was said, "He is a hard worker and he knows his business, *but* he is dishonest." Of the second it was said, "He is strictly honest and very capable, *but* he won't work." Of the third it was said, "He is very capable and well liked, *but* he is immoral." And while praise is wonderful, yet when the account gets around to the *buts*, everyone had better pay strict attention. You can't cancel off a little immorality with a little industry, or a little dishonesty with a little ability, or a little atheism with a few good intentions.

Present-day attitudes

The FBI Uniform Crime Report says that last year we had over four million arrests for robbery in amounts over fifty dollars. Of these, some 777,000 were auto thefts. Many people are presently replacing the Ten Commandments with their own version of the new morality. We have millions of practicing atheists, and we have a murder or a suicide committed every fifteen minutes around the clock. This modified code says: Thou shalt not kill unless someone gets in your way, or thou shalt not commit adultery unless you like your partner, or thou shalt have no other Gods before me unless you get a better idea. And some have gone so far as to repudiate their own God-given sense of responsibility.

One young woman was recently asked by a reporter for *Look* magazine if she thought it was wrong to break the Ten Commandments. She said, "Who am I to say what is right or wrong?" And some say that it doesn't matter anyway, either one way

or the other. However, in our own day the Lord has reaffirmed and reemphasized these great laws given from Sinai. As recorded in the 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, he has said: "Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it." (D&C 59:6.) We are doing many things that are "like unto" breaking the Ten Commandments. It is easy for half-believers and under-achievers to be guilty of those damaging sins of fractional devotion with marginal morals and a minimum performance. Disobedience and sloth always draw down upon us a burden of consequence that is much too heavy for us to bear.

I was not present at Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given, and yet I know just as well as any who were present that it is right to obey God and to honor our parents. I know that those people who keep the Sabbath day holy will be a different kind of people from those who do not. I know as well as the people at Sinai knew that it is wrong to profane, steal, covet, bear false witness, kill, commit adultery, or do anything like unto any of them.

Robbing God

Through Malachi, the Lord said, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." (Mal. 3:8.)

If the people who failed to pay their tithing were robbing God then, and we are doing the same thing, we are robbing God now. And when we rob God, we are also stealing from ourselves. Unless we intend to destroy our own inheritance, we should put up some strong protecting guard rails

along the boundaries of that straight and narrow way that leads to the celestial kingdom. We ought to paint some heavy yellow lines running between right and wrong and put some stop signs on those dead-end streets where travel has been forbidden.

God himself has said that he cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, and that no sin is ever permitted in his presence. And when we assume wrong attitudes, set bad examples, or do wrong things, we are thwarting his purposes. We are violating that great command that says "Thou shalt not bear false witness" when we claim to be the children of God and then go around acting like orphans, sinners, cowards, and weaklings.

Special witnesses for God

Because of our birthright, our intelligence, our covenants, and our assignments, we are all special witnesses for God and have some very important things that we *should* do. God is our eternal Heavenly Father. We are all his representatives in that greatest of all family enterprises which Jesus referred to as "my Father's business." That is the business of building integrity, character, and eternal life into the lives of his children. And one of the things that we should very frequently do is to go in the strength of the Spirit and again stand before Mount Sinai while we take stock of those things that God himself has placed out of bounds. And the emphasis of a little table pounding will help us to more securely make up our minds to eliminate those things that must *not* be done under any circumstances.

And may God help us so to do, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.