

opened these services singing "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" under the direction of Jay Welch with Alexander Schreiner at the organ, will now sing, "The Lord's Prayer," following which Elder Marion D. Hanks, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will offer the invocation.

The Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "The Lord's Prayer."

The invocation was offered by

President N. Eldon Tanner

First Counselor in the First Presidency

As I speak to you this beautiful Sabbath morning, I humbly pray that the Spirit and blessings of the Lord will attend us and be with us always.

I well remember, and some of you may also remember, singing the song "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" Our beloved president and prophet, Spencer W. Kimball, used to sing this song with such great feeling that many were moved to tears. Let me read the words:

Where is my wandering boy tonight,
the boy of my tend'rest care:
The boy that was once my joy and light,
the child of my love and prayer?

Once he was pure as morning dew, as
he knelt at his mother's knee;
No face was so bright, no heart more
true, and none was so sweet as he.

Oh, where is my boy tonight? where
is my boy tonight?
My heart o'erflows, for I love him, he
knows,
Oh, where is my boy tonight?

Anonymous

Wandering defined

This morning I should like to

Elder Marion D. Hanks, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

The Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring."

President Kimball

The Tabernacle Choir has sung the beautiful "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring."

We shall be pleased now to hear from President N. Eldon Tanner, first counselor in the First Presidency of the Church.

rephrase this question and ask, "Why is my boy wandering tonight?" and apply it to all who may be wandering.

According to the dictionary, *wander* means to speak, move, or travel about without fixed destination, plan, or purpose; to roam or to rove; go casually or by an indirect route; to deviate in conduct, or opinion; to go astray.

It is with these definitions in mind that I wish to discuss the question: "Why are so many wandering today?"

It seems that down through the ages people have wandered to and fro in the earth, and many never find their way out of the wilderness in which they are lost. The dictionary describes *wilderness* as an empty or pathless area or region, a pathless waste of any kind, a confusing multitude or mass. And thus those who aimlessly wander through life, confused and uncertain, waste the precious time that they have been given to prove themselves in this important stage of their existence.

I suppose that at some time or other in our lives each of us has felt a little lost, somewhat uncertain as to where we were going, or in a sense, wandering in a wilderness. Let us consider some of the reasons for wandering.

Power of Satan

Satan and his cohorts, including evil and designing men, are determined to keep man wandering in the wilderness so that eventually he will be destroyed and the work of the Lord will be thwarted. Adam and Eve were the first wanderers of record when they listened to Satan rather than the Lord. They were cast out of the Garden of Eden and had a period of wandering until they committed themselves to keeping the commandments of God.

Cain chose to follow Satan and, as a result, killed his brother Abel. He too was cast out and forced to wander in the wilderness of his transgressions, as were many other individuals and even larger groups of people of whom we read in the scriptures. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of the wickedness of the people, and there were not sufficient righteous to save those cities. You all know the story of Noah and the ark, wherein we find that all the people in the world, excepting eight souls, were destroyed because they refused to listen to or accept the teachings or warnings of the Lord.

False doctrines and deviations

Some wander because they do not understand and refuse to learn the teachings and the importance of keeping the commandments of God which will assure a safe passage through life and a return to the kingdom of our Father from whence we came. They are deceived and fail to realize, as Peter said:

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Pet. 2:1-2.)

Some are wandering into forbidden paths because they are seeking popularity with their peers, even to the extent of doing things they know are wrong. They cannot stand criticism or ridicule and will not take a firm stand against wrongdoing. Then there are always great pressures by some peers and wandering adults, and also by evil and designing men who work full time promoting the cunning ways of Satan.

There were such wanderers in the days our Savior walked on the earth. John records:

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be [cast] out of the synagogue:

"For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:42-43.)

Succumbing to weaknesses

They wander because of weakness of character. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (See Matt. 26:41.) These wanderers are in the wilderness of frustration and discontent. They know the law, but they succumb to temptation for a fleeting moment of pleasure to satisfy their appetites and passions.

Then we have the wilderness of hypocrisy which claims many victims. Hypocrites, by professing one thing and doing another, are themselves wandering away from the straight and narrow path, and taking with them many young and innocent souls who, seeing such dishonesty and distrust rampant in the world, are inclined to lose their faith in mankind and wonder where to turn.

We should read often the 23rd chapter of Matthew, which is the Savior's denouncement of the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites. We read in verse 13:

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

Poor examples

Many are in the wilderness because of following the poor example set by leaders in homes and communities. Traffic in this area is most congested and confusing. Pornography, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality are permitted and practiced in the world today to such an extent that we are truly following the ways of Sodom and Gomorrah. There is too much corruption in the world. We need strong leaders of good character in all places—leaders who are examples of integrity, dependability, and righteousness.

Breaking the Word of Wisdom, which we have been given by revelation, causes many to wander in other sad and forbidden paths. One sin leads to another, to more and more thrills and excitement, and on to destruction. When all of us know of the many ill effects of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, I wonder why so many are led astray.

Improper parental example in the home is a leading cause of the wandering of youth from the principles as taught in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The use of alcohol and tobacco in the home gives license to their children to do the same, and to indulge in other drugs and narcotics, which result too often in their leaving home and wandering as hitchhikers with packs on their backs, with no purpose, no particular destination, except away from the straight and narrow path of truth and righteousness. They are really no longer free, but while claiming that they are seeking freedom, they become slaves of their own bad habits, and it is most difficult for them to come out of the wilderness and back into the light and the love which they need so badly.

Immorality impairs progress

Immorality, though rampant in the world, is denounced by the Lord and is a most sure way of becoming lost in the

wilderness. The Lord said: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exod. 20:14.) Not only the one committing this sin and other transgressions, but the victim and many others are affected and will bear great burdens of sorrow and sadness.

Recently in the newspaper I read this account, which shows the grief and anxiety of one mother, who had undoubtedly spent many unhappy hours watching, waiting, and praying for her wandering boy.

"Police said the mother of a 16-year-old youth who was accused of raping a woman thanked officers after a policeman shot and killed her armed son.

"The youth . . . was killed when he pointed a .38-caliber pistol at the officer's face Thursday, police said.

"His mother . . . told officers after he shooting, 'I'm glad you all got him. I won't have to worry about him no more.'" (*Deseret News*, July 26, 1974.)

Yes, there are things worse than death.

Pride

Some are wandering because they are proud and haughty and trust in their own self-sufficiency. They have not yet learned their relationship to and dependence on God. We are admonished in the scriptures:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Prov. 3:5-6.)

Lack of self-discipline

Possibly the most lost of all is the wanderer who has failed through lack of desire or determination to discipline himself. His wilderness is dark and desolate indeed, and he will stumble and fall again and again until he emerges as master of himself.

Da Vinci once said: "You will

never have a greater or lesser dominion than that over yourself. The height of man's success is gauged by his self-mastery, the depth of his failure by his self-abandonment . . . and this law is the expression of eternal justice."

Quoting from Solomon, "He that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city." (Prov. 16:32.)

Christ gave us probably the best answer as to how to keep from wandering when he said:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13-14.)

The straight and narrow

It is so true that those who keep on the straight and narrow path and realize that detours are very dangerous are those who succeed in life and enjoy self-realization and achievement. Those who stray away and follow detours find themselves on paths leading to failure and destruction.

I recently heard two stories of wanderers which I should like to relate. The first was about a young man who came from a family of wealth and position in their community. He had a bright mind, did well in school, excelled in engineering, and had all the promise of a good career and the hope of a good life. Somewhere along the way, and in the manner of free thinkers of this day, he chose the companionship of some who were "doing their own thing," I suppose they called it.

Although warned of the dangers which lay ahead, he continued in the forbidden paths, experimenting with alcohol, drugs, and the gay life. Eventually he left his home and family, traveled across the country, took up residence in a community comprised of nomads, or wanderers, we might say. They were accountable to no one; they

were free to come and go as they pleased; they had no responsibilities and seemingly were leading the kind of carefree lives that they thought they wanted.

Sin reaps sorrow

There is a sad ending to nearly every story I have heard about those who drift away from the straight and narrow path. Such a tragedy ended the life of the young man to whom I refer. Under the influence of drugs and alcohol, and motorcycling with his companions late one night, he plunged through the rails of a bridge over a murky river and was killed. In agreement with some facetious pact he had supposedly made with his friends, they, without consulting his parents, conducted his funeral service, cremated the body, and strewed the ashes over the spot where he died.

Imagine the grief of his parents and his loved ones who were not able even to claim his body for proper burial. Just think of the many, many parents and family members who grieve daily over the absence of one of their number who has chosen to wander and waste his life in pursuit of he knows not what.

I watched a movie on television the other evening where a father was pleading with his daughter to return to the family circle and give up the association of those who were leading her down the evil path of eventual destruction. As she pulled away from his attempted embrace and said, "I have a right to live my own life," he answered, "You are hurting the whole family as well as yourself."

Christ's suffering

As Christ suffered and died *once* to save us from our sins, surely he suffers *again* out of his great love for us as we reject his teachings and his plan for our well-being both here and hereafter. Why can we not understand that he has promised us wealth untold if we will

only choose his way, instead of following Satan, whose course will lead us to destruction?

The other story I should like to tell is about another prodigal son in similar circumstances who also became involved with companions who persuaded him to leave home and family for the so-called freedom from the shackles of what they call "the establishment." He too went the whole route—alcohol, tobacco, drugs, immorality.

A different ending

The difference is between the endings of these stories. Something deep within kept the boy in touch with his family. Something stirred his memory of the teachings learned in his youth, and as his family strained to the breaking point to reach out and express their love on those occasions when he made contact with them, he eventually reluctantly consented to attend a family reunion, which was being held during one of his trips home. Unshaven, unkempt, long hair and all, he went.

Although disapproving, the family extended their welcome and their love. The boy felt their deep affection and knew that this was better than the superficial expressions of friendship from his other associates. He later accompanied his family to church and there met a sweet, young girl who showed an interest in him. Soon he was bathed, shaved, properly groomed, and living as he should.

It is honoring one's parents and conforming to the standards of decency of a well-ordered and God-fearing society that will keep one from wandering into some of the forbidden paths. Generally speaking, we behave in accordance with the way we look and speak. If we want to be a part of a clean, refined group or organization, then we must accept their rules and standards.

Obedience

Punishment and remorse, one way

or another, will come to all who wander from the path of truth and righteousness, while obedience to God's laws bring blessings and happiness. It is that simple: as we sow, so shall we reap. (See Gal. 6:7.)

How important it is that we do not wait until a child or other loved one wanders into forbidden paths before doing all possible to make those paths unattractive and uninviting and the path of righteousness irresistible. We must do this by love, precept, and proper example.

Knowing and understanding and keeping the commandments, and learning and living the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ will keep one walking in the straight and narrow path rather than wandering sad and lonely in the wilderness. We have been given a most glorious promise:

A glorious promise

"And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures:

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them." (D&C 89:18-21.)

Look to Christ

To all wanderers who are seeking to find their way out of the trackless wilderness and into the flowering, sunlit gardens, where the path is straight and the way leads to life eternal, I would plead that you look to the source of all light and knowledge, even God and his Son Jesus Christ; learn of them and keep their commandments which they have given; for I testify that they live, that their word is the truth, and there is

no other way to happiness and eternal life than through them.

I also bear my solemn witness that Jesus Christ has reestablished his church with the gospel in its fullness here upon the earth today with a prophet of God as its president. It offers us a sure way out of the wilderness and into the light. We invite all men everywhere to investigate and join with others in his church, which offers eternal life. I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "An Angel From On High."

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Of the Council of the Twelve

Today it is my hope to inform those who are not yet members of the Church, and at once to remind all of us who are members of the Church, of our responsibility to share the gospel.

Changed lives

Three weeks ago I was in New York City awaiting a flight to Europe. An employee of the airline left her place at the desk and came to where I was sitting.

"Two of my nephews have joined your Church," she told me. "I can hardly believe the change that it's made in their lives." In our brief conversation I asked how her sister felt about her sons joining the Church.

"She couldn't be happier," she said, and explained how the family had had real reason to be worried about the young men. They were two of the wanderers that President Tanner has spoken about. "You wouldn't believe how they've changed," she said. "They've cut their hair and the whole bit," as she put it.

Later, as I left to board the plane, she thanked me again and said, "I don't know how you do it."

President Kimball

We have heard from President Nathan Eldon Tanner, first counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing, "An Angel From On High."

To those of the television and radio audience who have just tuned in on this conference, we wish to extend our sincere greetings.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Gospel principles

In answer to her question, let me explain that for one thing we hold to high standards of conduct. The principles of the gospel are anchored and secure. Some of the programs and methods change from time to time, but there is no altering of the standards. There is a great sense of security and of protection in this.

We continually strive to share the gospel with others, but we cannot dilute it to suit their taste. We did not set the standards; the Lord did. It is his church.

We ask those of you who are not yet members of the Church to be patient if we seem too anxious to share what we have. If we do not share it, we may lose it. That is one of the requirements if we are to keep it. Therefore, missionary work is not casual; it is very determined.

Missionary effort

You should know that of the more than 18,000 missionaries serving fulltime in the world right now, fewer than five percent of them are 21 years of age.