

### **Ponder over your responsibilities**

Parents should ponder over their family home evenings and their responsibility to teach the gospel to their family. All members should ponder over the instructions received in sacrament and priesthood meetings, in Relief Society, and in messages from home teachers. Priesthood bearers should ponder over their responsibility to honor their priesthood, to be examples of righteousness. Quorum leaders should ponder over their responsibilities to serve, teach, and strengthen their quorum members and to lead in love and kindness. Young people should ponder over problems that might confront them and be prepared to cope with them in a way that their parents, their leaders, and their Heavenly Father would have them cope that they might keep themselves clean and pure.

In striving to be the best by God's standards, King Benjamin, a great Book of Mormon prophet, points the way:

"But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not." (Mosiah 4:30.)

Jesus counseled, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:21.)

President Spencer W. Kimball is a model, a great example to us of a prophet, seer, and revelator who does ponder, and who prays, and who receives revelations for the kingdom.

In our quest for pure hearts, may we ponder on righteous acts and thoughts, and may we be faithful and diligent.

I bear earnest and sincere testimony to the mighty transforming power of these noble ideals in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Romney**

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, O Thou King of Kings," following which Elder Gene R. Cook, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will speak to us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

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### **President Romney**

We shall now hear from Elder Gene R. Cook, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Elder Ronald E. Poelman, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

## **Elder Gene R. Cook**

### **Satan—master of illusion**

Last summer on a lonely stretch of desert highway, we saw ahead what appeared to be the road covered with

water. My children would have wagered their entire savings on that fact. But within a few minutes we were at the distant spot and saw not one drop of water. What an illusion!

How many things there are in this life that appear to be one way and all of a sudden are the reverse. (See Alma 62:41.) Satan operates that way. He is the master of illusion. He creates illusions in an attempt to detour, dilute, and divert the power and the attention of the Latter-day Saints from the pure truth of God.

He is particularly effective at creating spiritual illusions that cause a counterfeiting of spirituality, a spiritual instability, a self-deception—spiritual illnesses sowed in the heart little by little to harden the hearts of men and to lead them into sin and away from God. (See 1 Ne. 12:17; 3 Ne. 6:15.)

### **Puffed up in pride**

May I share a few of Satan's cunning illusions which undermine spirituality. Satan, with an illusion, leads a man to puff himself up with pride to say, "I am my own man. I know the Lord lives, but he expects me to handle this particular matter on my own and not bother him with any details." Not being familiar with the scriptures, the man may not know that Satan teaches the world there is no God. But to the Saints he simply says, "There is a God, but he is only *generally* involved in your life. He would not *specifically* help you today." Or he teaches the world not to pray, but to the Saints he simply says, "Don't pray now. You don't feel like praying right now." (See 2 Ne. 32:8-9.) The net effect is the same.

### **Holier-than-thou attitude**

Satan, in another illusion of vain imagination, teaches a man that the man is spiritual and humble. He begins to believe it and then acts in the eyes of the people as if he were. He begins to drift but full well believes, because of the illusions being created, that he is still on the strait and narrow. He develops a holier-than-thou attitude, but in his heart he is hardened, "past

feeling" (1 Ne. 17:45), and prideful. The master of illusion teaches men to honor the Lord with their lips, while their hearts are far from the Lord. (See JS-H 1:19.)

### **Spirituality and knowledge**

With others he disguises truth and equates spirituality with knowledge, with little or no emphasis on application of truths in personal lives. The man goes along his own way imagining himself to be learned, leaning on his own understanding (see Prov. 3:5; 2 Ne. 9:28), seeking the honor and esteem of men, and feeling it is sufficient to teach and not to do. The knowledge then, in and of itself, becomes an illusion and a stumbling block to maintaining the Spirit of the Lord.

### **Heart set on things of the world**

Still others the Lord blesses with great material blessings. But then Satan cunningly creates illusions and reverses the use of these blessings. He leads one to set his heart on the things of this world. (See D&C 121:35.) The man begins not to esteem his brethren as himself, but creates divisions, inequalities, or status distinctions among the people. Yes, Satan has been a liar from the beginning; he is "the author of all sin. . . . He doth carry on his works of darkness . . . as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men." (Hel. 6:30.)

### **Selfishness, spiritual instability, and general concern for self**

In this world of illusions, Satan sows selfishness, unbelief, fear, doubt, greed, spiritual instability, and a general concern for self into men's hearts. He is a master builder of spiritual detours to waste time, divert attention from that which is good, and diminish spiritual receptivity. Satan especially desires to deceive the Latter-day Saints, those who know the

truth about him, those who can particularly influence others in their teaching and living of the gospel in the home, in the classroom, from the pulpit, and in the world. In these days of increasing deception, and more to come, one must be aware of Satan's spiritual snares and be sure of his own discernment.

### **Spiritual Guides for Teachers of Righteousness**

I would like to suggest eight standards against which a person can measure his own teaching of the gospel as well as the doctrines taught by others, to help him unravel illusions and discern the truth. These standards might be entitled "Spiritual Guides for Teachers of Righteousness."

1. Not only will the teacher teach the truth, but the Spirit of the Lord will accompany the truth *and* the teacher. (See D&C 50:17-22.) Both should be subject to spiritual confirmation at any time. The teacher will not teach without authority nor speak independently for himself, knowing that even the very elect can be deceived. (See Matt. 24:24.)

2. The teacher will be in accord with the General Authorities as a group and with his local leaders, knowing they are guides to safety. He will have desires to follow and conform to their teachings and example in all their spiritual and temporal declarations, knowing the Lord gives them the gifts of discernment. (See D&C 46:27.) He will not complain, criticize, or speak evilly of the Lord's anointed, knowing that such a practice is an early warning sign of apostasy.

3. The teacher of righteousness will teach from the holy scriptures and will teach that which is taught and confirmed by the Holy Ghost. (See D&C 52:9.) He will not "teach for doctrines the commandments of men." (JS—H 1:19.) He will not mingle the history and opinions of men with the scriptures nor spend religious

instruction time teaching speculation or the philosophies of the world, thereby giving Satan's views exposure. He will not teach "doctrines" upon which the Lord's prophet has not spoken. (See D&C 28:2-3.) He knows that the scriptures lead one to faith on the Lord and unto repentance, which bring a change of heart. (See Hel. 15:7; Al. 37:8.)

4. The teacher will teach in simplicity, according to the true needs of the people, basic gospel doctrines like faith, repentance, and prayer, which all men—all men—can apply. (See D&C 19:31; Al. 26:22.) He will not look beyond the mark by exaggerating, by teaching in the fringe areas, by expanding on the scriptures, or by teaching exotic extremes in any principle, like excessively lengthy prayers, false doctrines about the Savior or about Adam, or extremes in diet, or politics, or investments. He will remember that Satan works in the extremes. He knows of the exactness of the Lord's doctrine, but also of "temperance in all things." (D&C 12:8.)

5. The teacher will speak in the light of day. (Moro. 7:15, 18-19.) He will not speak of secret doctrines, of special elite groups "in the know," or of secret ordinations. (See Jacob 4:13; D&C 42:11.) Whatever he does will be in the plain view of the people. He knows that doctrines and ordinations are subject to the open view and vote of the Saints.

6. The teacher will treat all those being taught as like unto himself, not esteeming himself above his brethren. (See Jacob 2:17.) He will seek excellence before the Lord, but not to excel over his companions in the work. (See D&C 58:40-41.) He knows that "none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart." (Moro. 7:44.)

7. The teacher of righteousness will be anxious to glorify the Lord. He will refuse to assume any glory unto himself. He will not practice priestcrafts—that is, preaching and holding himself up as a light to the

world for gain or for the honor of men. (See 2 Ne. 26:29; Mosiah 18:26.) He will be a preacher of righteousness speaking forcefully against sin, having an eye single to God, not to personal gain, honor, or popularity among men. He knows worldly aspirations leave the door open wide to apostasy.

8. The teacher himself will be in the process of continual personal repentance. (See Moro. 8:26.) He will be an example of meekness, charity, pure motives, dependence on the Lord. He will not just be teaching the doctrine, but also applying it. (See D&C 41:5; 52:15-16.) All in all, it will be evident whom he represents.

### Full purpose of heart

In summary, then, how does one keep himself from falling, as some have, into teaching and living semi-truths? Is it not by maintaining his own spirituality? What is true spirituality? Is it knowledge, intellect, academic learning? Perhaps more than anything else it is an ongoing, purifying condition of the heart. It is an eye single to God. It is a broken heart and a contrite spirit. (See 3 Ne. 9:20; D&C 136:32-33.) It is a "full purpose of heart."

As I have had opportunity over the years to be among the Brethren, the one distinguishing characteristic that seems to be found in all of them, as well as in other spiritual leaders, is their intense desire to take upon them the name of the Lord with "full purpose of heart," a desire to serve the Lord above all else, at any cost. (See

D&C 18:27-28, 38.)

It should not surprise one to see that the Lord's requirements to serve him in church callings are conditions of the heart (see D&C 4; 12:8; 41:11), nor that the Lord has said, "I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts." (D&C 137:9.)

Brothers and sisters, no Latter-day Saint will go astray if he will follow the inspired counsel of the Lord and his servants. I testify that if a man will maintain his own spirituality—

- by praying without ceasing,
- by studying and pondering the scriptures continually, and
- by obeying his leaders and the light and truth that he presently understands—

He will not be deceived.

May the Lord bless all of us not to be fooled by illusions created by the devil. May we maintain our spiritual fine-tuning by yielding our hearts to God, becoming firmer and firmer in the faith (see Hel. 3:35), is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Romney

Elder Gene R. Cook, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Ronald E. Poelman, also a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder LeGrand Richards, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Ronald E. Poelman

The Galilean fisherman Simon Peter, upon recognizing for the first time the divine power of Jesus, exclaimed, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8.)

### Father's strengthening influence

Each one of us, at times, may feel as Peter, conscious of our failings and uncomfortable at the thought of