

of any book on earth—the Book of Mormon.

I have a vision of artists putting into film, drama, literature, music, and paintings great themes and great characters from the Book of Mormon.

I have a vision of thousands of missionaries going into the mission field with hundreds of passages memorized from the Book of Mormon so that they might feed the needs of a spiritually famished world.

I have a vision of the whole Church getting nearer to God by abiding by the precepts of the Book of Mormon.

Indeed, I have a vision of flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon.

An absolute need

My beloved Saints, I am now entering my ninetieth year. I am getting older and less vigorous and am so grateful for your prayers and for the support of my younger Brethren. I thank the Lord for renewing my body from time to time so that I can still help build His kingdom.

I do not know fully why God has preserved my life to this age, but I do know this: That for the present hour He has revealed to me the absolute need for us to move the Book of Mormon forward

now in a marvelous manner. You must help with this burden and with this blessing which He has placed on the whole Church, even all the children of Zion.

Moses never entered the promised land. Joseph Smith never saw Zion redeemed. Some of us may not live long enough to see the day when the Book of Mormon floods the earth and when the Lord lifts His condemnation (see D&C 84:54–58). But, God willing, I intend to spend all my remaining days in that glorious effort. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang “What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold” without announcement.

President Hinckley

It has been our privilege to listen to the opening address of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. Following his remarks, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang “What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Warning against drug abuse

I am impressed to speak out on a problem of deep concern—the worldwide epidemic of drug addiction. As a medical doctor, my study of drugs began early in medical school. Each doctor spends months in specialized courses learning potential benefits and risks of medicinal agents. Proper prescription of drugs is the forte of skilled physicians. Generally, when their advice is carefully followed, results are remarkably successful. In addressing this topic, I specifically exclude such application of modern knowledge by educated professionals.

But I raise my voice with others throughout the world who warn against

abuse of drugs beyond prescribed limits, and the recreational or social use of chemical substances so often begun naively by the ill-informed.

A vicious cycle

From an initial experiment thought to be trivial, a vicious cycle may follow. From trial comes a habit. From habit comes dependence. From dependence comes addiction. Its grasp is so gradual. Enslaving shackles of habit are too small to be sensed until they are too strong to be broken. Indeed, drugs are the modern “mess of pottage” for which souls are sold. No families are free from risk.

But this problem is broader than hard drugs. Their use most often begins with cigarette smoking.¹ Tobacco and alcoholic beverages contain addicting drugs. They lead the list in incidence and cost to society.

As I speak with governmental and medical leaders of many nations, they voice grave concern over the consumption of alcohol and other substances by their citizens. Though the extent of the challenge is international, data from the United States of America will be cited solely to indicate the monstrous scope of this worldwide problem.

Tobacco

Consider the magnitude of tobacco's harm. Cigarette smoking is the most frequent preventable cause of heart disease, artery disease, lung disease, and cancer.² In the USA in 1982, 16 percent of all deaths (314,000) were attributed to the smoking of tobacco.³

For the year 1985, the estimated cost of both smoking-related health care and lost productivity amounted to \$65 billion. That calculates to an average of \$2.17 per pack of cigarettes sold.⁴ Social consequences of smoking far exceed the price paid to purchase cigarettes.

An insurance company recently reported that one-fifth of all its claims were for afflictions that could have been prevented by simply not smoking.⁵ We all bear this financial burden of illness that need not be.

Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop and his team of more than fifty scientists recently published a landmark report. For the USA alone, they attributed 320,000 deaths annually to tobacco, 125,000 to alcohol, and lesser mortality to cocaine (2,000) and other opioids (4,000). They declared nicotine to be a powerfully addicting drug in the same sense as are drugs such as heroin and cocaine.⁶ Comparable views have been recorded by medical authorities in many other nations.⁷ Yet many of our good friends who use tobacco may not believe it to be addicting. Some are reluctant to admit that their behavior is substantially

controlled by a drug. We understand those feelings.

Alcohol

There is mounting concern worldwide over the consumption of alcohol. The U.S. government estimates that 10.6 million adults are alcoholics and that one family in four is troubled by alcohol.⁸ It is a factor in half of all the nation's traffic deaths.⁹

Last year, a tragic milestone was reached. More Americans had been killed from alcohol-related motor vehicle accidents (1,350,000) than had been killed in all the wars America has ever fought (1,156,000).¹⁰

Other drugs

Drugs such as LSD, marijuana, heroin, and cocaine are also endangering people throughout the earth. The noble attributes of reason, integrity, and dignity, which distinguish men and women from all other forms of life, are often the first to be attacked by these drugs and alcohol.

We reach out in love to family, friends, and neighbors, regardless of nationality or creed, who suffer addiction. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues to help relieve this international plague.

Importance of understanding agency

The solution to this problem ultimately is neither governmental nor institutional. Nor is it a question of legality. It is a matter of individual choice and commitment. Agency must be understood. The importance of the will in making crucial choices must be known. Then steps toward relief can follow.

Agency, or the power to choose, was ours as spirit children of our Creator before the world was (see Alma 13:3, Moses 4:4). It is a gift from God, nearly as precious as life itself.

Often, however, agency is misunderstood. While we are free to choose, once we have made those choices, we are tied to the consequences of those choices.

We are free to take drugs or not. But once we choose to use a habit-forming drug, we are bound to the consequences of that choice. Addiction surrenders later freedom to choose. Through chemical means, one can literally become disconnected from his or her own will!

Road to recovery

For relief of an ailment, as a doctor of medicine I might write a prescription. As an ordained Apostle, I would invoke the spiritual blessing of eternal perspective. Combined, my spiritual prescription would return the gift of agency to its rightful owner.

Each one who resolves to climb that steep road to recovery must gird up for the fight of a lifetime. But a lifetime is a prize well worth the price.

This challenge uniquely involves the will, and the will can prevail. Healing doesn't come after the first dose of any medicine. So the prescription must be followed firmly, bearing in mind that it often takes as long to recover as it did to become ill. But if made consistently and persistently, correct choices can cure.

Spiritual prescription

My spiritual prescription includes six choices which I shall list alphabetically, A through F, and then comment about each:

- Choose to be alive
- Choose to believe
- Choose to change
- Choose to be different
- Choose to exercise
- Choose to be free

1. Choose to be alive. Seek beloved family, friends, and physicians. Plead for their help. Your precious life is at stake. Cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life (see 2 Nephi 10:23).

The choice for life brings an outlook of optimism. It breathes hope. It rekindles self-esteem—regarding one's body as a timeless trust. And it awakens a personal

commitment to “see that ye take care of these sacred things, . . . that ye look to God and live” (Alma 37:47).

2. Choose to believe. Believe in God. Accept yourself as His child, created in His image. He loves you and wants you to be happy. He wants you to grow through life's choices and become more like Him. He pleads that you will “reconcile [yourself] to the will of God, and not to the will of the . . . flesh” (2 Nephi 10:24).

Reconciliation requires faith, repentance, and baptism. Be “born of God, changed from [your] carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness” (Mosiah 27:25). Renew covenants made at baptism by worthily partaking of the sacrament regularly, “that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world” (D&C 59:9).

Then “be meek and lowly in heart; . . . withstand every temptation of the devil, with . . . faith on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Alma 37:33).

Choose to believe in and be blessed by your Creator.

3. Choose to change. “How long will ye suffer [yourself] to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?” (Helaman 13:29). Choose to change—today!

“The spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). Both spirit and body have appetites. One of life's great challenges is to develop dominance of spiritual appetites over those that are physical. Your willpower becomes strong when joined with the will of the Lord.

Addiction to any substance enslaves not only the physical body but the spirit as well. Therefore, repentance is best achieved while one still has a body to help attain spiritual supremacy:

“This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; . . . this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

“ . . . Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance; . . . if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. . . .

Saturday, October 1

First Day

"That same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life . . . will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:32-34).

"To be carnally-minded is death, [but] to be spiritually-minded is life eternal" (2 Nephi 9:39; see also Romans 8:6). That blessing will come to those with the will to change.

4. *Choose to be different.* Distinguish yourself from worldly crowds. Defenders do not resemble offenders. Among them are clever merchandisers who plot to link beer with sports, tobacco with charm, and drugs with fun. Scripture warns of those who so deceive:

"Thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

His Word of Wisdom includes sound nutritional guidance and simple instructions. We are not to drink alcoholic beverages (see D&C 89:5-7). We are not to use tobacco (see D&C 89:8). We are not to drink tea or coffee (see D&C 89:9). And in this same spirit, we are not to use addicting drugs.¹¹

So to modern Israel, God has given modern counsel, similar to ancient commandments recorded in the Old Testament:

"It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:

"Lest they drink, and forget the law" (Proverbs 31:4-5).

"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken" (Habakkuk 2:15; see also Proverbs 20:1).

Certainly modern medical research validates the physical benefits of obedience to the Word of Wisdom. The evidence is so great that many will be taught the right things for only half of the right reasons. With that limited understanding, could they then try a smoke, a drink, or a drug, rationalizing that "just one won't hurt?" Could the prospect of only future physical rewards even be bait for foolish

dares of defiance now? Or to phrase these questions another way, how many would be *determined* to obey the will of the Lord even if physical benefits were *not* assured? When God asked Abraham to offer Isaac in sacrifice, did they first seek scientific confirmation that their choice to obey was medically advisable?

The Word of Wisdom is a spiritual law. To the obedient He proclaimed, "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 89:21).

At the first passover, the destroying angel did pass over houses that were marked with blood on the doorposts. In our day, the faithful keep the Word of Wisdom. It is one of our signs unto God that we are His covenant people.

Choose to be different; you will be blessed both physically and spiritually.

5. *Choose to exercise.* Exercising the body and the spirit will aid in the climb toward recovery. Appropriate physical activity helps to combat depression, which so often accompanies addiction.

But spiritual exercise is even more crucial. This battle will be more easily won with fervent prayer. If we truly "counsel with the Lord in all [our] doings, . . . he will direct [us] for good" (Alma 37:37).

Strength comes from uplifting music, good books, and feasting from the scriptures. Since the Book of Mormon was to come forth "when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth" (Mormon 8:31), study of that book in particular will fortify us. President Benson has issued that challenge.

Exercise the body and the spirit and choose to exercise faith in God.

6. *Choose to be free.* Break "bands of iniquity" (Mosiah 23:12; see also 1 Nephi 13:5). Leave behind "an iron yoke, . . . handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell" (D&C 123:8).

Choose to be free from feigned friends who first flatter yet later despise (see D&C 121:20). Drug abuse may have started with them, but you pay the price.

"Remember, my brethren [and sisters], that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free" (Helaman 14:30).

The Lord has revealed His sacred standard to guide people in a troubled world. You and I were born free to follow His divine guidance. We may choose for ourselves. Those choices may bring addiction or freedom. For freedom and joy, choose to "be faithful in Christ." He will lift you up. May "the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever" (Moroni 9:25), I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *The Health Consequences of Smoking: Nicotine Addiction*, Public Health Service [U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988], pp. 262-63.

2. *Cigarette Smoking and Cardiovascular Disease 1985: Special Report to the Public*, American Heart Association (50-075-A).

3. Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Congress Staff Memorandum, Sept. 1985, p. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

5. *Utah Hospital Leaders Digest*, 15 July 1988, p. 2.

6. *The Health Consequences of Smoking: Nicotine Addiction*, Public Health Service [U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988], pp. 14, 334.

7. Among them are Nigel Gray, director, Anti-Cancer Council, Victoria, Australia; David Simpson, director, Action on Smoking

and Health, U.K.; Pamela Taylor, spokesperson, British Medical Association, U.K.; Andrew Pipe, University of Ottawa Heart Institute, Canada; Roberta Ferrence, Addiction Research Foundation, Canada; Bernice McKay, secretary, Commonwealth Department of Health, Australia. *Times and Seasons*, Documentary on Tobacco, July 1988.

8. "Coming to Grips with Alcoholism," *U.S. News and World Report*, 30 Nov. 1987, pp. 56-57.

9. *Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention*, Public Health Service [U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979], p. 125.

10. *Accident Facts*, Annual Report of the National Safety Council, 1975, confirmed by telephone conversation 20 July 1988.

11. Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, April 1983, pp. 69-72; or *Ensign*, May 1983, pp. 54-55. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 8; or *Ensign*, May 1974, p. 7. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 47; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 49. Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay, "Message of the First Presidency," in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, pp. 8-10.

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing "Praise to the Man." After this, Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will address us.

The chorus and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

Bishop Robert D. Hales

How to make good choices

The scriptures teach us that an important part of mortal probation will be making the right choices. How do we make the right choices when there are so

many temptations and so many people telling us what they think we should do with our lives?

There are three important elements that will allow us to make good decisions: