

Over those intervening years as I have taken that stroll down memory lane, I have listed the many miracles that have occurred in my life and that I have witnessed. My thoughts go out in gratitude to that loving Father, the Father of us all, who stands with arms outstretched, cheering us on, asking us to come home to him and to his beloved Son, our Savior.

I think of all those choice souls: my mother, who at eighty-one still is the pacesetter in our family as she leads the way for her children to follow; teachers; advisers; and many dear associates over those many years.

### The great joy of the Lord's word

It is more apparent to me now than ever that, as Alma of old declared, the word of the Lord and the preaching of his word has a greater tendency to lead the people to do that which is just. It has a more powerful effect than even the sword or anything else (see Alma 31:5). This I have seen in the lives of those choice missionaries that I have had the privilege the past almost-three years to serve with—additional sons and daughters added to our family circle, sons and daughters that Sister Cutler and I love with all our hearts. I have seen that miracle happen over and over again as the word of the Lord is taught to his children and those of his flock who hear his voice and have a change of heart and come unto him.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is true. It is the greatest joy, the only pure joy, we

have in this life. As we embrace it and all things we hold dear—families, loved ones—all else is wrapped in that great package of love from a Father on high who loves us.

I conclude with a testimony I heard this past week from three recent converts who bore their testimonies with tears in their eyes for the knowledge they have gained in just a few short months. They testified that Heavenly Father does live, that he cares, that Jesus is the Christ and that, yes, they have a road map and a pattern to follow, and it is contained in the Book of Mormon—that blueprint given to bring them safely home. They testified that Joseph Smith is the Prophet of this dispensation and that today, standing as the mouthpiece of the Lord, is President Ezra Taft Benson. I join with them in this testimony, for I know it all to be true with all my heart because of the life and the blessings that I have been granted. I bear you this testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Kenneth Johnson and Clinton L. Cutler of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which we shall hear from Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen of the Seventy.

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The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

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## Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen

A year ago when I was called as a Seventy, a nonmember patient of mine asked me an interesting question. She wanted to know if a Seventy was higher or lower in the Mormon Church than a bishop. When I asked her why she would ask such a question, she replied that she was interested to know just what I'd be doing. She said she understood that in the Mormon Church, every calling from

a bishop on down was all work, and everyone from a bishop on up was all talk. This may be the reason for my wanting to *talk*, tonight, to you Aaronic Priesthood brethren.

### The example of Sneaky

Many of you during your lifetime have had a pet that may have come to a

tragic end, with sad moments following. Some years ago while traveling on a family vacation, we acquired a rather unusual pet, which was a small, friendly, not-too-long water snake from the beaches of Puget Sound. My children named him Sneaky, as short for Sneaky Snake.

Early one morning while the family was off walking near the motel, Sneaky somehow got out of his cardboard box. When the room attendant entered to tidy up the room in our absence, Sneaky, seeing the open door, headed for it. She slammed the door shut in absolute terror, and since Sneaky got caught in the door, we might say he came all apart.

It was the end of Sneaky, the beginning of a nervous breakdown for the girl attendant, and a time of weeping and disappointment on the part of our children.

Now there is a lesson here. The attendant had erroneously perceived Sneaky as something less than the friend he was.

### Friends and the Word of Wisdom

We've heard from Bishop Hales tonight about true friends. May I add a thought or two about them? All of us may have been at one time or other confused as to just who our true friends are. Let me give you an example of what I mean as it relates to the Word of Wisdom.

Some years ago in my medical office I had occasion to examine a young man who was approximately the same age as you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I was puzzled by what seemed to be his medical problem.

After several tests and x-rays, I found *myself* amazed at the diagnosis. He was an alcoholic at his young age.

He told me that he had begun having alcoholic drinks at a very early age due to the encouragement of his so-called friends.

I wondered to myself, Are friends that encourage us to break the Word of Wisdom really our true friends?

Phrases like "just try it once" or "everybody does it" or "who is going to

know" are all too commonly used. If they were true friends, would they pressure us that way?

Indeed, in life it may be difficult to tell at times just who our true friends are. Were my young patient's friends the kind he should strive to keep? The room attendant perceived Sneaky as a potentially harmful enemy instead of a friend, and yet the reverse was true.

A true friend of yours and mine gave us the Word of Wisdom through his Prophet Joseph Smith.

Medical research tells us that by far the majority of young people who begin using alcohol or tobacco products do so with the urging of their friends.

### The Lord knows what is best for us

The Lord has told us that neither strong drinks, meaning alcoholic drinks, nor tobacco are for the body and that they are not good for man.

Let me talk to you rather plainly, my young friends. As a physician, who for forty years has witnessed firsthand the truth of those statements in the Word of Wisdom, I testify that they are true.

The beautiful scenes in magazine advertisements are not what the end results of cigarette smoking prove to be. This advertising in these magazines and newspapers is very deceptive. The end results are not nearly so pretty. They are oxygen masks and intravenous medication and literally hours of pain, misery, and gasping for breath.

Remember that approximately 5,000 people a day quit smoking, and another 1,000—every single day—die from cigarette smoking, or one in every ninety seconds, in the United States alone. This means that each day 6,000 people either kick the habit or kick the bucket. No wonder the cigarette companies spend billions to keep their unwitting customers buying their lethal wares.

I had my own comment printed and pasted on all cigarette advertising in the magazines of my medical office waiting room. It states:

"Many of the ads in this magazine are misleading, deceptive, and are a rip-off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, or athletic. It does make one sick, poor, and dead."

How true this is.

### The heavy price of little things

Smoking is indeed becoming less and less popular as the heavy smokers one by one pass on. If an industrial accident killed everyone in the entire Salt Lake Valley, the nation would be horrified. That, however, is the scale of the annual tobacco disaster. One out of every six people that die in the United States dies as a result of smoking.

Almost inevitably, the user of hard drugs begins first with alcohol or tobacco, both of which are drugs of the highly addicting kind themselves.

In addition, the real damage from the use of these things is usually even more severe to our spiritual lives than it is to our physical bodies. Now, would a true friend be one to entice you to use them? I'm sure he wouldn't.

### The value of a true friend

Look closely at your friends. Cultivate good friends. They're so valuable. Remember the Savior valued his friends so highly that he would lay down his life for them. He had this to say about friends:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

And then he went on to say:

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (15:14-15).

Friendship is an extremely important part of your life. Someone has said a true friend is someone who makes it easier to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Help your friends live righteously

Many of you young men will be, at some time or another, approached by one or more of your "friends" who will entice you to do something you know you should not do—it might be something you know deep down inside will hurt your parents and your Father in Heaven. It may be violating the Word of Wisdom, for example, or committing moral transgression, which is so displeasing to the Lord.

"No one will ever know," the so-called friends will tell you. "Besides, what difference will it make?"

My young friends, you don't have to reject your friends who are on the wrong path; you don't even have to give them up necessarily. You can be their caring friend, ready to help them when they are ready to be helped. You can talk to them and lift them and bear your testimony to them. Lead them by example.

But don't ever be led into displeasing your Father in Heaven by your friends who might ask that as a condition of being your friend, you must choose between their way and the Lord's way.

If that happens, choose the Lord's way and look for new friends.

### True friends stand by each other

Especially important are our friends in times of need when we may have feelings of loneliness or despair. True friends will stand by you. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was incarcerated in that terrible Liberty Jail, he was told by the Lord:

"Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

"Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job" (D&C 121:9-10).

Knowing his friends would stand by him was a great assurance to Joseph Smith during this trying experience.

Some of the most trusted and loving friends you will ever have on this earth

are your parents and family. It may be that only when you have children of your own will you fully appreciate the bonds of love that exist between parents and children.

You'll find as you grow into manhood that advice from your parents as to who should or should not be your true friends will be very reliable and valuable to you.

### **The Lord is our best friend**

Cultivate our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ as your friend above all. Being his friend will without exception lift your vision and bring you comfort, guidance, peace, and, yes, even the companionship of other true friends.

I know something of his love, his compassion, his mercy, and the help one may receive from him and the Holy Spirit. He has promised that by obedience to his word, you "shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19).

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

### **"Am I my brother's keeper?"**

The Holy Bible is an inspiration to me. This sacred book has inspired the minds of men and has motivated readers to live the commandments of God and to love one another. It is printed in greater quantities, is translated into more languages, and has touched more human hearts than any other volume.

Particularly do I enjoy reading from the book of Genesis the account describing the creation of the world. Ponder the power of that culminating declaration: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them" (Genesis 1:27-28).

Joy turns to sadness as we learn of Abel's tragic death at the hands of his brother Cain. Chapters of counsel, lessons for living, guidance from God are found in one brief verse: "And the Lord

Just think! With Jesus as your friend, you may receive increased strength and testimony that will uphold you against temptations when they arise.

Choose your friends wisely. They will provide the foundation of spiritual strength that will enable you to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly when they come in your life.

Above all, be a friend of the Savior. You, my young men, are the honored holders of a royal priesthood. If you have not done so previously, now is the time to let him know you consider him your true friend and that you will be a true friend of his.

That we may all qualify to be his disciples, his friends, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen of the Seventy has just spoken to us, and President Benson has indicated that I should now address you.

said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).

### **Joseph was his brothers' keeper**

These two significant questions are asked, then answered, in themes taught throughout the scriptures. One such example is found in the life of Joseph and his brothers. We will recall that Joseph was especially loved by his father, Jacob, which occasioned bitterness and jealousy on the part of his brothers. There followed the plot to slay him, which eventually placed Joseph in a pit without food and without water to sustain life. Upon the arrival of a passing caravan of merchants, Joseph's brothers determined to sell him rather than to leave him to die. Twenty pieces of silver extricated Joseph from the pit and placed him eventually in