

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall hear now from Elder Richard G. Scott, also a member of the Council of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Sister Barbara W. Winder, released yesterday as general president of the Relief Society.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Finding the life you want

The purpose of this message is to help many of you find the life you want, not the one you are living.

I speak to you who find yourselves caught in a pattern of life that you neither enjoy nor want. You may publicly profess that all is well and reject the efforts of others to help you with a comment that you know what you are doing and can handle it yourself. Yet, in quiet moments, you know you are miserable, lonely, and sometimes afraid. You avoid thinking too much about what you are doing. The walls seem to close in around you. You are driven by appetites that bring momentary physical response but are followed by periods of deep depression. Let me help you as we reason together.

I need not define your specific problem to help you overcome it. It doesn't matter what it is. If it violates the commandments of the Lord, it comes from Satan, and the Lord can overcome all of Satan's influence through your application of righteous principles.

Please understand that the way back is not as hard as it seems to you now. Satan wants you to think that it is impossible. That is not true. The Savior gave His life so that you can completely overcome the challenges you face (see 2 Nephi 2:6-8).

Change requires honesty

Do you find that when someone mentions the mistakes you're making, you are prone to lie about them, to indicate that they are much less severe than they truly are? Do you admit only to

what is publicly seen and try to hide from others how really bad conditions are? Worst of all, do you lie to yourself, pretending that things are all right when they are not? That attitude prevents you from getting the help you need. It provides an invitation to more serious problems.

When you are honest with yourself, you may feel afraid. To change will require you to take an unfamiliar path, and it is uphill and narrow. The other is so inviting, but it leads to heartache. None of your partners in error will help you onto the upward path. They think only of themselves (see D&C 10:25). You know the result of following their path—unhappiness, failure, disappointment, and greater fear. They don't love you. They want to use you. Don't listen to them.

Listen to the Lord, not Satan

Lucifer will do all in his power to keep you captive. You are familiar with his strategy. He whispers, "No one will ever know." "Just one more time." "You can't change; you have tried before and failed." "It's too late; you've gone too far." Don't let him discourage you.

When you take the path that climbs, that harder path of the Savior, there are rewards along the way. When you do something right, when you resist temptation, when you meet a goal, you will feel very good about it. It is a very different kind of feeling than you have when you violate commandments—an altogether different feeling. It brings a measure of peace and comfort and provides encouragement to press on.

As you pray for help, the Lord will place in your path priesthood leaders who will counsel and friends who will give

support if you'll let them. But remember, they can help only by your following the rules that Christ has set out for the journey. Any lasting improvement must come from your own determination to change (see Mosiah 3:17-20).

If it were possible to make your road very easy, you wouldn't grow in strength. If you were always forgiven for every mistake without effort on your part, you would never receive the blessings of repentance. If everything were done *for* you, you wouldn't learn how to work, or gain self-confidence, or acquire the power to change.

Be faithful and unselfish

Freedom from your transgression will come through sincere faith, true repentance, willing obedience, and the giving of self (see Alma 26:22).

Why the giving of self? Because selfishness is at the root of your problem. Where selfishness and transgression flourish, the Spirit of the Lord can't enter your life to bless you. To succeed, you must conquer your selfishness. When your beacon is focused on self, it does little more than blind your vision. When turned outward through acts of kindness and love, it will light your path to happiness and peace.

Your exercise of faith permits you to call upon the strength of the Lord when you need it. Obedience to His commandments allows that help to be given. The power of God will come into your life because of your faithful obedience to His commandments.

Don't live your life in despair, feeling sorry for yourself because of the mistakes you have made. Let the sunshine in by doing the right things—now (see 1 Nephi 22:26).

Unravel knots step by step

It may be difficult to begin, but pick up the scriptures and immerse yourself in them. Look for favorite passages. Lean on the Master's teachings, on His ser-

vants' testimonies. Refresh your parched soul with the word of God (see 2 Nephi 4:15-16). The scriptures will give you comfort and the strength to overcome (see Helaman 3:29-30).

If you've tangled your ordered life into a ball of knots, it has taken time to get it that way. It is unreasonable to expect to unravel it all at once. Start knot by knot, decision by decision, and be sure that while you are untying the knots, you don't let any more get put there through transgression.

This example suggests how your habit can be overcome.

Suppose a small child were to run in front of your car. What would you do? Careful analysis of each step taken will teach you how to overcome your serious habit:

- First your mind decides to stop. Nothing else can happen until that decision is made.

- Then you take your foot off the accelerator. Can you imagine stopping a car with one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake?

- Finally you firmly apply the brake.

The same pattern is followed to overcome your entrenched habit. Decide to stop what you are doing that is wrong. Then search out everything in your life that feeds the habit, such as negative thoughts, an unwholesome environment, and your companions in mischief. Systematically eliminate or overcome everything that contributes to that negative part of your life. Then stop the negative things permanently.

Recognize that you'll go through two transition periods. The first is the most difficult. You are caging the tiger that has controlled your life. It will shake the bars, growl, threaten, and cause you some disturbance. But I promise you that this period will pass. How long it takes will depend upon the severity of your transgression, the strength of your determination, and the help you seek from the Lord. But remember, as you stand firm, it will pass.

The second period is not as intense. It is like being on "battle alert" so that you can fend off any enemy attack. That, too, will pass, and you will feel more peace and will have increased control of your life. You will become free.

Find out about the Lord's plan

Once I had a measuring tape that didn't work. I decided to fix it. I began to remove the side cover plate to find what was wrong. In a few moments, I knew I was in trouble. Suddenly, the whole mechanism exploded in my hands. There were tape and spring flying in all directions. My efforts to put it all back together were frustrating and often painful. Irritated, I just about threw the whole thing away. Then I thought, "Someone designed this tape. If I can discover the principles that make it function, I can fix it." With greater patience, I began to examine the mainspring and found that if coiled in a certain way, instead of resisting and complaining, it easily responded. Soon the spring was coiled, carefully placed in its housing, the tape joined, the cover replaced, and it worked perfectly.

So it is with you. When, through violation of God's laws, you cease to function properly, force and compulsion will not restore you. You must search out the Designer's plan. As you follow it, you will become more pliable. You can be "repaired" more easily, and you will function well again under His divine influence.

Decide now to change

The overcoming of serious transgression follows a pattern. First, and most difficult, is the internal battle, the crosscurrent of feeling, the anguish about being found out, the worry about the impact on other lives, and the fear of the unknown. This struggle is prolonged through indecision, and that means more pain and further damage. It can be cut short through decisive personal commitment to clean up your life, now. *Right now.* Once that decision is made, there

follow many individual decisions and acts, none of which is overpowering. Yet, taken together, they will kill the monster that's controlling your life.

The most difficult part about changing is to make an unwavering decision to do it and, when required, to enlist the help of your bishop. Once that beginning is made, you will find the rest of the path becomes easier than you imagined. Some days are more difficult than others, but the process becomes easier because through your use of agency, you qualify for the Lord's help, and He magnifies your efforts (see Omni 1:26).

Establish specific objectives, and move steadily toward them. A rudder won't control a drifting boat; it must be underway. Similarly, you need to be moving forward to gain control of your life.

Satan would have you rationalize—that is, twist something you know to be true into a pattern that appears to support your deviation from truth. Rationalization leads you down blind alleys in life. It drains spiritual power. It barricades the path to happiness because it distorts your understanding of truth. Overcome rationalization with truth and positive decisions. In time, they will form character resistant to the eroding influence you are striving to overcome.

Stay firm to your commitment

When you decide to change and then discover that there is a way to cheat on your promise without anyone's knowing, don't do it. That will destroy your self-confidence and will weaken others' trust in you. It will discourage them from helping you. There is simply nothing good about cheating yourself by being disobedient to trust; there is no positive element of reinforcement that would otherwise come from obedience.

To reach a goal you have never before attained, you must do things you have never before done.

Don't confront your problem armed with only your own experience, understanding, and strength. Count on the infi-

nite power of the Lord by deciding *now* to be obedient to His teachings (see 2 Nephi 31:19-21).

If loved ones seem to ignore you, it is because they don't know what to do. Their past attempts to help have been rejected; you have not wanted help. Reach out to them trustingly. Ask for support in your sincere efforts to change. Give them reason to know that this time is different because you will do it the Lord's way.

As you make progress on the way back, you will discover feelings that you haven't had for a long time—feelings of concern for others, feelings of unselfish love, feelings of a desire to be near loved ones, and of self-respect and confidence. These stirrings are evidence of progress, like a growing light at the end of a tunnel.

I wish I could replace your doubt with my certainty, but I can't give it to you. I can provide an invitation: Please, decide now to repent and change your life. I promise you, in the name of the Lord, that He will help you. He will be there in every time of need. He gave His

life so that you can change your life. I promise you that you'll feel His love, strength, and support. Trust Him completely. He is not going to make any mistakes. He knows what He is doing. Please, decide now to change your life. Be obedient to His teachings, and He will bless you. I promise you He will bless you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Sister Barbara W. Winder, released yesterday as general Relief Society president. She has been called as a missionary to accompany her husband, Richard Winder, in his appointment as president of the Czechoslovakia Prague Mission.

Sister Winder will be followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, who was sustained yesterday as general Relief Society president.

Barbara W. Winder

My dear brothers and sisters, my heart is full to capacity. As we have been released in the normal rotation of assignments, we want to welcome those who have been newly called and to offer them our love and sincere support.

A time to gather the harvest

Luther Burbank wrote: "Like the year [at the end of summer,] I pause now, toward the end of my allotted time, to glance backward and to gather my harvest of experience and growth and friendship and . . . memory. . . ."

"[And] what has been my 'harvest. . . .'?"

"The harvest of work accomplished and aims achieved. . . ."

"The harvested experiences and lessons that have moulded and impressed . . . my . . . life. . . ."

"[And] the harvest of dear friendships, happy memories. . . ."

"[And] the harvest is rich and heavy and abundant" (*The Harvest of the Years* [Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931], pp. 280-81).

The harvest of work accomplished

The work of Relief Society is focused on the pure and simple part of the gospel, to develop faith and bear testimony; to render compassionate service as we care for the needy; to strengthen our families here and in eternity; and to work with our "hearts knit together in unity and love one towards another" (Mosiah 18:21).

Our harvested experiences and lessons have been molded with many of you.