

May God bless all fathers to righteously obtain and maintain this patriarchal key to the blessing of families throughout the Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Durrel A. Woolsey of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President Thomas S. Monson

Come, all ye sons of God

One of my most vivid memories is attending priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon and singing the opening hymn, "Come, All Ye Sons of God Who Have Received the Priesthood." Tonight, to this capacity audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in chapels worldwide, I echo the spirit of that special hymn and say to you, Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood; let us consider our callings, let us reflect on our responsibilities, let us determine our duty, and let us follow Jesus Christ, our Lord.

While we may differ in age, in custom, or in nationality, we hold membership in the same church and are united as one in our priesthood callings.

Two weeks ago I attended a sacrament meeting where the children responded to the theme, I Belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These boys and girls demonstrated they were in training for service to the Lord and to others. The music was beautiful, the recitations skillfully rendered, and the spirit heaven-sent. My eleven-year-old grandson had spoken of the First Vision as he presented his part on the program. Afterward, as he came to his parents and grandparents, I said to him, "Tommy, I think you are almost ready to be a missionary."

He replied, "Not yet; there is much I have to learn."

For the strength of youth

To help him and all youth prepare for their service to God, a new booklet, entitled *For the Strength of Youth*, has

been published under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. The booklet features standards from the writings and teachings of Church leaders and from scriptures, adherence to which will bring the blessings of our Heavenly Father and the guidance of His Son to each of us.

May I share with you, as I shared with the sisters in the women's meeting held last week, portions of the introduction to this new guide to your mortal journey, this new road map to help you chart an undeviating course toward eternal life. The statement by the First Presidency begins:

"Our beloved young men and women,

"We want you to know that we love you. We have great confidence in you. . . .

"We desire everything in this world for you that is right and good. . . . You are choice spirits who have been held in reserve to come forth in this day when the temptations, responsibilities, and opportunities are the very greatest. You are at a critical time in your lives. . . .

"We counsel you to [be] morally clean. . . .

"You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible! Years of happiness can be lost in the foolish gratification of a momentary desire for pleasure. . . .

"You can avoid the burden of guilt and sin and all of the attending heartaches . . . as you keep the standards outlined in the scriptures and emphasized in this pamphlet.

"We pray that you—the young and rising generation—will keep your bodies and minds clean, free from the con-

taminations of the world, that you will be fit and pure vessels to bear triumphantly the responsibilities of the kingdom of God in preparation for the second coming of our Savior" (*For the Strength of Youth* [pamphlet, 1990], pp. 3–5).

May I review with you, the young men of the Church, these special standards referred to in the introduction just read? There are twelve items, followed by a conclusion. I shall treat briefly each standard.

1. Dating

Begin to prepare for a temple marriage. Proper dating is a part of that preparation. In cultures where dating is appropriate, do not date until you are sixteen years old. Not all teenagers need to date or even want to. When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. Make sure your parents meet and become acquainted with those you date. Because dating is a preparation for marriage, date only those who have high standards.

Be careful to go to places where there is a good environment, where you won't be faced with temptation.

A wise father said to his son, "If you ever find yourself in a place where you shouldn't ought to be, get out!" Good advice for all of us.

2. Dress and appearance

Servants of the Lord have always counseled us to dress modestly to show respect for our Heavenly Father and for ourselves. The way you dress sends messages about yourself to others and often influences the way you and others act. Dress in such a way as to bring out the best in yourself and those around you. Avoid extremes in clothing and appearance.

3. Friendshipping

Everyone needs good friends. Your circle of friends will greatly influ-

ence your thinking and behavior, just as you will theirs. When you share common values with your friends, you can strengthen and encourage each other. Treat everyone with kindness and dignity. Many nonmembers have come into the Church through friends who have involved them in Church activities.

4. Honesty

The oft-repeated adage is ever true: "Honesty's the best policy" (Miguel de Cervantes, in *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed., comp. John Bartlett [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968], p. 197). A Latter-day Saint young man lives as he teaches and as he believes. He is honest with others. He is honest with himself. He is honest with God. He is honest by habit and as a matter of course. When a difficult decision must be made, he never asks himself, What will others think? but rather, What will I think of myself?

For some, there will come the temptation to dishonor a personal standard of honesty. In a business law class at the university I attended, I remember that one particular classmate never prepared for the class discussions. I thought to myself, How is he going to pass the final examination?

I discovered the answer when he came to the classroom for the final examination, on a winter's day, wearing on his bare feet only a pair of sandals. I was surprised and watched him as the class began. All of his books had been placed upon the floor. He slipped the sandals from his feet; and then, with toes that he had trained and had prepared with glycerine, he skillfully turned the pages of one of the books which he had placed on the floor, thereby viewing the answers to the examination questions.

He received one of the highest grades in that course on business law. But the day of reckoning came. Later, as he prepared to take his comprehensive examination, for the first time the dean of his particular discipline said, "This

year I shall depart from tradition and shall conduct an oral, rather than a written, test." Our favorite, trained-toe expert found that he had his foot in his mouth on that occasion and failed the examination.

5. Language

How you speak and the words you use tell much about the image you choose to portray. Use language to build and uplift those around you. Profane, vulgar, or crude language and inappropriate or off-color jokes are offensive to the Lord. Never misuse the name of God or Jesus Christ. The Lord said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

6. Media: movies, television, radio, videocassettes, books, and magazines

Our Heavenly Father has counseled us to seek after "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Articles of Faith 1:13). Whatever you read, listen to, or watch makes an impression on you.

Pornography is especially dangerous and addictive. Curious exploration of pornography can become a controlling habit, leading to coarser material and to sexual transgression.

Don't be afraid to walk out of a movie, turn off a television set, or change a radio station if what's being presented does not meet your Heavenly Father's standards. In short, if you have any question about whether a particular movie, book, or other form of entertainment is appropriate, don't see it, don't read it, don't participate.

Recently there appeared in the newspaper an observation by comedian Steve Allen. It describes one of the greater problems of our time:

"Steve Allen doesn't find anything funny about television's trend toward stronger language and adult-oriented themes. The veteran comedian lashed out at current television trends in an

opinion piece published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

"The 'flow is carrying all of us right into the sewer,' he wrote. 'The very sort of language parents forbid their children to use is now being encouraged not only by anything-goes cable entrepreneurs but the once high-minded networks,' said Allen. 'Shows that depict children and others using vulgar language only point up the collapse of the American family,' he said."

Perhaps Mr. Allen was referring to a review in a recent issue of *Newsweek* magazine entitled "A Season on the Brink." "Desperate to outrun [competition], the Big Three [networks] launch lineups that are rocking, ribald, real . . . and risky," reads the subheadline. A summary statement declares, "The networks . . . are suddenly turning the airwaves blue" (Harry F. Waters, 3 Sep. 1990, pp. 70-71).

7. Mental and physical health

The Apostle Paul declared, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Nutritious meals, regular exercise, and appropriate sleep are necessary for a strong body, just as consistent scripture study and prayer strengthen the mind and spirit.

Hard drugs, wrongful use of prescription drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco products destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Any form of alcohol, including beer, is harmful to your spirit and your body. Tobacco can enslave you, weaken your lungs, and shorten your life.

8. Music and dancing

Music can help you draw closer to your Heavenly Father. It can be used to educate, edify, inspire, and unite. However, music can, by its tempo, beat, intensity, and lyrics, dull your spiritual sensitivity. You cannot afford to fill

your minds with unworthy music. Dancing can be enjoyable and provide an opportunity to meet new people and strengthen friendships. Plan and attend dances where dress, grooming, lighting, dancing styles, lyrics, and music contribute to an atmosphere in which the Spirit of the Lord may be present.

9. Sexual purity

Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage, as well as full fidelity after marriage. In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you. Tears inevitably follow transgression. Men, take care not to make women weep, for God counts their tears.

President David O. McKay advised, "I implore you to think clean thoughts." He then made this significant declaration of truth: "Every action is preceded by a thought. If we want to control our actions, we must control our thinking." Brethren, fill your minds with good thoughts, and your actions will be proper. May each one of you be able to echo in truth the line from Tennyson spoken by Sir Galahad: "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure" (in *Familiar Quotations*, p. 647).

From ancient times comes an example which emphasizes this truth. Darius, through the proper rites, had been recognized as legitimate king of Egypt. His rival, Alexander, had been declared legitimate son of Ammon; he, too, was Pharaoh. Alexander found the defeated Darius on the point of death and laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, concluding, "I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods, that I do these things truly and without fakery," to which Darius replied with a gentle rebuke, "Alexander, my boy . . . do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?"

Brethren, are we prepared to touch heaven as we fill our priesthood callings?

Recently, the author of a paper on teenage sexuality summed up his research by saying that he doesn't see any major reduction ahead in the sexual activity of teenagers, in part because society sends teens a mixed message: advertisements and the mass media convey "very heavy messages that sexual activity is acceptable and expected," inducements that sometimes drown out the warnings of experts and the pleas of parents. The Lord cuts through all the media messages with clear and precise language when He declares to us, "Be . . . clean" (3 Nephi 20:41).

Whenever temptation comes, remember the wise counsel of the Apostle Paul, who declared, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

10. Sunday behavior

The Lord has given the Sabbath day for your benefit and has commanded you to keep it holy. Many activities are appropriate for the Sabbath. Bear in mind, however, that Sunday is not a holiday. Sunday is a holy day.

11. Spiritual help

When you were confirmed a member of the Church, you received the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost. He can help you make good choices. When challenged or tempted, you do not need to feel alone. Remember that prayer is the passport to spiritual power.

12. Repentance

If any has stumbled in his journey, there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Our Savior died to

provide you and me that blessed gift. Though the path is difficult, the promise is real: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Don't put your eternal life at risk. Keep the commandments of God. If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

These, then, are the standards found in *For the Strength of Youth*. Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others.

Greetings from President Benson

Our beloved President Ezra Taft Benson sends to you his greetings. He loves you. He trusts you. And how might you return that love, that trust?

You have a heritage: Honor it.

You will meet sin: Shun it.

You have the truth: Live it.

You have a testimony: Share it.

A missionary's faith

Spiritual strength frequently comes through selfless service. Some years ago, I visited the California Mission, where I interviewed a young missionary from Georgia. I recall saying to him, "Do you send a letter home to your parents every week?"

He replied, "Yes, Brother Monson."

Then I asked, "Do you enjoy receiving letters from home?"

He didn't answer. At length, I inquired, "When was the last time you had a letter from home?"

With a quavering voice, he responded, "I've never had a letter from home. Father's just a deacon, and Mother's not a member of the Church. They pleaded with me not to come. They said that if I left on a mission they would not be writing to me. What shall I do?"

I offered a silent prayer to my Heavenly Father: "What shall I tell this young servant of Thine, who has sacri-

ficed everything to serve Thee?" And the inspiration came. I said, "Elder, you send a letter home to your mother and father every week of your mission. Tell them what you are doing. Tell them how much you love them, and then bear your testimony to them."

He asked, "Will they then write to me?"

I responded, "Then they will write to you."

We parted, and I went on my way. Months later I was attending a stake conference in Southern California when a young man came up to me and said, "Brother Monson, do you remember me? I'm the young missionary who had not received a letter from my mother or my father during my first nine months in the mission field. I'm the one to whom you said, 'Send a letter home every week, Elder, and your parents will write to you.'" Then he asked, "Do you remember that promise, Elder Monson?"

I remembered. I inquired, "Have you heard from your parents?"

He reached into his pocket and took out a sheaf of letters with an elastic band around them, took a letter from the top of the stack and said, "Have I heard from my parents! Listen to this letter from my mother: 'Son, we so much enjoy your letters. We're proud of you, our missionary. Guess what? Dad has been ordained a priest. He's preparing to baptize me. I'm meeting with the missionaries; and one year from now we want to come to California as you complete your mission, for we, with you, would like to become a *forever family* by entering the temple of the Lord.'" Then the young man put his hand in mine and asked, "Brother Monson, does Heavenly Father always answer prayers and fulfill Apostles' promises?"

I replied, "When one has faith as you have demonstrated, our Heavenly Father hears such prayers and answers in His own way."

Clean hands, a pure heart, and a willing mind had touched heaven. A blessing, heaven-sent, had answered the fervent prayer of a missionary's humble heart.

Brethren, it is my prayer that we may so live that we, too, may touch heaven and be similarly blessed. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast in the Tabernacle and also the Sunday morn-

ing session which follows must be in their seats by 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in your driving.

We thank the combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus for the inspiring music this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "Hosanna." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Francis M. Gibbons of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, brethren, if you'll bear with me for a few minutes I'd like to express some thoughts if I may be inspired by the Spirit. First let me say that I have appreciated all that has been said in this meeting. Much has been spoken to the young men. I endorse all of it. I hope that you have had impressed upon your minds the counsel you have heard. If you follow it, it will bless your lives, now and through all the years to come.

Counselors are important

As we come to the conclusion of this meeting, I want to talk with you about a particular subject.

In a previous general priesthood meeting, I spoke about the duty of bishops. I discussed the entire field of their responsibilities. I suppose none of you have remembered that, but I recall doing so nevertheless.

Tonight, I think I should like to talk with you about counselors. There are twice as many counselors as there are bishops and presidents, and they are important.

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, has created in this church what we call presidencies. Essentially, all quorums and organizations are presided over by a presidency, except the Council of the Twelve Apostles, where there is one president of the Quorum, and

the Quorums of the Seventy, where there are seven presidents. I think I can understand why there is no presidency of the Twelve. The Council consists of twelve mature men, each of whom has comparable leadership responsibilities. The number is relatively small. Furthermore, the entire Twelve is a very close-knit body, with every man free to express himself on any matter that comes before the Quorum. Evidently, there is no need for a presidency of three to preside over the remaining nine brethren. All are seasoned by long experience. They are men who have been called with a special calling.

In the case of the Seventy, the number is large and flexible in terms of the number of quorums that might be organized. Each of the presidents, who is called from the First Quorum of Seventy, is coequal with the others, with one of the seven being denoted as the senior president.

In the case of the priests quorum, the bishop serves as president. But whether it be a bishopric, stake presidency, Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthood quorum presidency, mission presidency, temple presidency, auxiliary organization presidency, Area Presidency, or the First Presidency of the Church, there is a president with counselors.