

### President Monson

In the sweet spirit of this morning's solemn assembly and the session this afternoon, the choir will now favor us with "Secret Prayer." Following the

choir number, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

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The choir sang "Secret Prayer."

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## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Making the right choices

Present tonight are many young men who hold the priesthood of God.<sup>1</sup> Some of you look forward to being a missionary when you are older. Others are planning to go soon. Still others have completed missions and are seeking an eternal companion. I am sobered by the realization that some of you will not reach these worthy goals because of other choices you are making now.

I am grateful this is a private priesthood meeting, for I have felt impressed to treat sensitive yet important matters. While they apply to all present, I particularly want to talk with you young men. I will speak as though you and I were alone in a private interview and no one else can hear us. My purpose is to help you learn how to make the right choices. That will help you develop strong feelings of self-worth. You will have confidence to do right and overcome strong negative peer pressure and bad influences.

As a young boy I felt that some things that I heard discussed by others at school about private parts of the body were wrong. Yet I wasn't really sure how wrong or why they were wrong. You may have similar feelings. Since in tonight's setting you cannot ask me anything, I will use some of the confidential questions most frequently asked by youth I have met across the world. I will answer them by what I have learned from the scriptures and the prophets. You then will have clear standards from which to

make choices. I pray that as we talk, the Holy Ghost will let you feel the truth of what is said. I know that as you listen and think of how our interview applies to you, there will come impressions regarding what to do about it in your own life.

### How can we resist peer pressure?

Question: Could you give us some help about resisting peer pressure? Why do some people do things that are wrong, then brag about how much fun they are having? When I don't participate, they make me feel stupid because I won't do it.

Answer: You can't please God without upsetting Satan, so you will get pressure from those he tempts to do wrong. Individuals who do wrong want you to join them because they feel more comfortable in what they are doing when others do it also. They may also want to take advantage of you.

It is natural to want to be accepted by peers, to be part of a group. Some even join gangs because of that desire to belong, but they lose their freedom, and some lose their lives.

One of the hardest things for you to recognize is how truly strong you already are and how others silently respect you. We have great confidence in you. You don't need to compromise your standards to be accepted by good friends. The more obedient you are, the more you stand for true principles, the more the Lord can help you overcome temptation.<sup>2</sup>

You can also help others because they will feel your strength. Let them know about your standards by consistently living them. Answer questions about your principles when you are asked, but avoid being preachy. I know from personal experience that works.

No one intends to make serious mistakes. They come when you compromise your standards to be more accepted by others. You be the strong one. You be the leader. Choose good friends and resist peer pressure together.

### **How can we resist bad thoughts?**

**Question:** How do we keep bad thoughts from entering our minds, and what do we do when they come?

**Answer:** Some bad thoughts come by themselves. Others come because we invite them by what we look at and listen to.<sup>3</sup> Talking about or looking at immodest pictures of a woman's body can stimulate powerful emotions. It will tempt you to watch improper videocassettes or movies. These things surround you, but you must not participate in them.

Work at keeping your thoughts clean by thinking of something good.<sup>4</sup> The mind can think of only one thing at a time. Use that fact to crowd out ugly thoughts.<sup>5</sup> Above all, don't feed thoughts by reading or watching things that are wrong. If you don't control your thoughts, Satan will keep tempting you until you eventually act them out.<sup>6</sup>

### **Why is the law of chastity so important?**

**Question:** Why is the law of chastity so important? Why is sex before marriage wrong?

**Answer:** Fundamental to the great plan of happiness and central to the teachings of the Savior is the family. A new family begins when a man and woman make sacred marriage vows and are legally bound together to become husband and wife, father and mother.

The perfect beginning is through sealing in the temple.

With marriage they commit the best of themselves to be absolutely loyal to each other and to invite children to be nurtured and taught. The father assumes his role as provider and protector, the mother her role as the heart of the home, with her tender, loving, nurturing influence. Together they strive to instill in themselves and their children principles such as prayer, obedience, love, giving of oneself, and the quest for knowledge.

Within the enduring covenant of marriage, the Lord permits husband and wife the expression of the sacred procreative powers in all their loveliness and beauty within the bounds He has set.<sup>7</sup> One purpose of this private, sacred, intimate experience is to provide the physical bodies for the spirits Father in Heaven wants to experience mortality. Another reason for these powerful and beautiful feelings of love is to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration of each other, and common purpose.

However, those intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside the enduring commitment of marriage because they undermine His purposes.<sup>8</sup> Within the sacred covenant of marriage, such relationships are according to His plan. When experienced any other way, they are against His will. They cause serious emotional and spiritual harm. Even though participants do not realize that is happening now, they will later.

Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time, that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin. It engenders selfishness and can produce aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion, sexual abuse,

and violent crime. Such stimulation can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong.<sup>9</sup>

Sexual transgression would defile the priesthood you now hold, sap your spiritual strength, undermine your faith in Jesus Christ, and frustrate your ability to serve Him. Consistent, willing obedience increases your confidence and ability. It produces character that allows you to face difficult challenges and overcome them. It qualifies you to receive inspiration and power from the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

### **What are the limits of intimacy?**

**Question:** They always tell us we shouldn't become sexually involved, but they never tell us the limits. What are they?

**Answer:** Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body.<sup>11</sup>

Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. Satan particularly seeks to tempt one who has lived a pure, clean life to experiment through magazines, videocassettes, or movies with powerful images of a woman's body. He wants to stimulate appetite to cause experimentation that quickly results in intimacies and defilement. Powerful habits are formed which are difficult to break. Mental and emotional scars result.

When you are mature enough to plan seriously for marriage, keep your expressions of feelings to those that are comfortable in the presence of your parents.<sup>12</sup> To help you keep these sacred

commandments, make a covenant with the Lord that you will obey them. Decide what you will do and will not do. When temptation comes, do not change your standards. Do not abandon them when circumstances seem to justify an exception. That is Satan's way to hurt you by making it seem that sometimes God's law does not apply. There are no exceptions.

### **How far is too far before marriage?**

**Question:** Before you are married, how far is too far to go if it is with your girlfriend?

**Answer:** Before marriage there can be no sexual contact with a girlfriend, fiancée, or anyone else, period.<sup>13</sup> While a commandment, that standard is for your happiness. That's why the Church counsels you to go in groups and not to date while you are young. Later, as you prepare for marriage, remember that true love elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates you to make sacrifices for the girl you love. Satan would promote counterfeit love, which is really lust. That is driven by hunger to satisfy personal appetite. Protect the one you love by controlling your emotions to the limits set by the Lord. You know how to be clean. We trust you to do it.

### **How does a person repent of sexual sin?**

**Question:** How do you go about repenting after a sexual sin is committed? What sins should you tell the bishop?

**Answer:** All of the sexual transgressions we have discussed require sincere repentance with the participation of the bishop. Should you have done any of this, repent now. It is wrong to violate these commandments of the Lord. It is worse to do nothing about it. Sin is like cancer in the body. It will never heal itself. It will become worse unless cured through repentance. Your parents can

help strengthen you. Then you can become clean and pure by repentance under the guidance of the bishop. He may seem to be busy or unavailable. Tell him you are in trouble and need help. He will listen.

A youth in serious trouble said, "I have done things that I knew were bad. I have been taught they were ever since I can remember. I know repentance is a great gift; without it I would be lost. But I'm not ready to repent of my sins, yet I know when I am ready I can." How tragic. The thought of intentionally committing serious sin now and repenting later is perilously wrong. Never do that.<sup>14</sup> Many start that journey of intentional transgression and never make it back. Premeditated sin has greater penalties and is harder to overcome. If there is sin, repent now—while you can.

### Stay morally clean

I pray that as we have talked, you have had feelings to do better.<sup>15</sup> You hold the priesthood of God. That is a sacred responsibility<sup>16</sup> and also a singular privilege.<sup>17</sup> You will be fortified in your determination to live righteously as you study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Listen to your parents, leaders, and the prophet we have sustained today. Have faith in the Savior. He will help you.<sup>18</sup> Remember He said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."<sup>19</sup>

Please stay morally clean. The Lord will make that possible as you do your part with all your strength.<sup>20</sup> Jesus Christ lives, and He loves you. He will help you as you do your part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), p. 64; see also "Discourse by President Wilford

Woodruff," *Millennial Star*, 21 Oct. 1889, p. 657.

2. See 1 Corinthians 10:13.
3. See H. Burke Peterson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, pp. 58–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, pp. 42–44.
4. See *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), pp. 278, 445–46.
5. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 23–24; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, pp. 27–28.
6. See Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, p. 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, p. 47; see also Robert L. Simpson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1972, p. 144; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 112.
7. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 9; or *Ensign*, May 1974, p. 7.
8. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, pp. 136–39; or *Ensign*, July 1972, pp. 111–13.
9. See Spencer W. Kimball, "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, pp. 97–98.
10. See D&C 43:9, 15–16.
11. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, p. 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 8; in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 6–7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 6; "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 97.
12. See *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 283–84.
13. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), pp. 264–65, 280–81.
14. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 70–72.
15. See D&C 64:33–34.
16. See D&C 84:35–39; see also Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), pp. 124–25.
17. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 494.
18. See Moroni 10:32.

19. D&C 82:10.  
20. See 3 Nephi 18:20.

### President Monson

We have heard from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now speak to us, and he'll be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference.

## Bishop Richard C. Edgley

### Confidence in shooting free throws

I, like many of you, take delight in watching the extraordinary performance of outstanding athletes on the field of competition. It is always a thrill to see the fulfillment of thousands of hours of practice, dedication, and sacrifice manifest through an unusual play, a last-second touchdown pass, a game-winning goal, or pressure-filled free throws. It always amazes me to see a basketball player step up to the free throw line and consistently, shot after shot, pressure upon pressure, calmly put the ball through the hoop—all net. Last year Jeff Hornacek, after joining the Utah Jazz in midseason, hit thirty-three consecutive free throws—a Jazz season record. *He was shooting with great confidence.*

I am interested in free throw records because I believe I also set a free throw record in high school—unrecorded, but a record that I believe would stand even today. It was in a game between my alma mater, Preston High, and Malad High in Idaho. It was played in the old Malad High School gymnasium in 1954.

Early in the game I was fouled in the act of shooting and was awarded two foul shots. I calmly stepped to the free throw line, set my toe about one-eighth of an inch from the line, and did my best imitation of my then basketball idol, Bob Cousy, by bouncing the ball twice, spinning it in my hands, taking a deep breath, and shooting. It was a pretty good imita-

tion—until I released the ball. I missed both shots.

A few moments later I was again at the foul line going through the same established routine. To my despair I missed again—twice. As fortune would have it, we were into the game only six or seven minutes, and I was at the line missing my sixth and seventh foul shots. As I approached my ninth and tenth shots, I noticed that the basket, which was regulation size at the beginning of the game, was in some magical way beginning to shrink. Each time I came to the line, it got smaller and smaller.

My confidence wasn't bolstered much as I saw images of distress in the faces of my teammates and expressions of calm glee and a twinkle in the eyes of my opponents each time I came to the line. By my fifteenth miss, my arms and legs were frozen stiff, and I could see the basket getting so small that even a softball couldn't pass through it. When I approached the line to miss my eighteenth consecutive free throw, the basket seemed about the size of a golf hole, and I knew that even Bob Cousy would not stand a chance. *I was not shooting with much confidence.*

Thankfully the final buzzer sounded and my record ceased at eighteen consecutive misses—a record not easily achievable and one I doubt any of you sports enthusiasts have ever witnessed. As I left the court, my confidence was devastated, and ahead of me remained