

Acknowledging our tendency to wander in strange roads (see 1 Nephi 8:32), we plead to the Lord through this hymn:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it;  
Seal it for thy courts above.  
["Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *Hymns* (1948), 70]

I close with the prayer of Nephi speaking for you and for me: "O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road" (2 Nephi 4:32), in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Ben B. Banks of the Presidency of the Seventy has spoken to us, followed by Sister Sharon G. Larsen, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

The choir and congregation will now sing "High on the Mountain Top." Following the singing, Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy will speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Neil L. Andersen, also of the Seventy.

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

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## Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone

### The Church will never waver on sin

Alexander Solzhenitsyn referred to short-sighted concessions: "A process of giving up and giving up and giving up and hoping and hoping and hoping that perhaps at some point the wolf will have had enough."

My wonderful young friends, let me promise you, the wolf will never have enough.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said: "Where the spirit invades the heart, there can be no rest. For even in the dark of night, one link of the chain still holds, one light that will not go out."

Doesn't it make you deeply grateful to belong to a church with apostles and prophets at the head—knowing that one link will always hold, one light will never go out? As the world moves deeper and deeper into sin, this wonderful Church stands like a giant granite boulder.

Aren't you proud that the Church teaches us the truth? We don't have to wonder about earrings for boys and men, tattoos, spiked hair, the four-letter

words, and obscene gestures. We have prophets who model the standards. They teach that the Ten Commandments are not outdated. The word of the Lord has thundered down through the generations: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7). Profaning God's name is a great offense to the Spirit, and to do so is Satan's great ploy to mock our God.

Jehovah also declared, "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15). Stealing is an affront to God. This commandment is one of only ten. Cheating, lying, bearing false witness are all types of stealing.

Beloved youth, aren't you thankful to God that the apostles and prophets never waver on sin? No matter how strong the winds of public opinion may blow, the Church is immovable. "God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife."<sup>1</sup>

Those who espouse perverse principles and deviant behavior are living in sin. Laws, consensus, consenting adults

that teach contrary to the gospel are wrong even if the majority accepts them. Sin is sin, and that is God's truth. The Apostle Paul declared, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

### **Evils of pornography**

Pornography is evil. I love the story told at the funeral of Henry Eyring's father. When he was a young man coming across the border from the Mexican colonies to the United States, the customs man said, "Son, do you have any pornography in your suitcase or trunks?" He responded, "No sir, we don't even own a pornograph." It's wonderful to be that pure and naive. We know pornography is addictive and destructive. It has companions it travels with: drinking, smoking, and drugs. It uses some types of music, dancing, the Internet, and television. Those who produce it are godless and have no conscience. They know the consequences, but they don't care. Like those who peddle drugs, they will never be around to pick up the pieces when you're all broken up. But we will—your parents, bishops, and leaders.

### **Good friends are a safeguard**

Be careful who you make your close friends. Two men were talking, and one said, "Hey, Joe, I passed your house the other day." And Joe said, "Thanks." Be grateful if you are not included in the wrong groups. There will always be a strong warning come to you beforehand.

Rudyard Kipling said:

Now this is the Law of the Jungle—  
as old and as true as the sky;  
And the Wolf that shall keep it may  
prosper, but the Wolf that shall  
break it must die.

As the creeper that girdles the tree—  
trunk the Law runneth forward  
and back—

For the strength of the Pack is the  
Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf  
is the Pack.<sup>2</sup>

Your friends are a safeguard.

### **Importance of teaching youth**

A word to adults and parents: Elder Bruce R. McConkie's father counseled that when we violate any commandment, however small, our youth may choose to violate a commandment later on in life perhaps 10 times or 100 times worse and justify it on the basis of the small commandment we broke.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most important influences on the religiosity of our youth is the spontaneous religious discussions in our homes. When we discuss the things we love most—not because they are scheduled, such as family home evening, prayer, or scripture study, but because they are so precious to us—they have a profound influence on our children.

Grady Bogue, college professor, said: "Rightly done, teaching is a precious work. It is, however, the one human endeavor most damaging in consequence when done without care or competence. To carry a student in harm's way because of either ignorance or arrogance—because we do not know or do not care—is an act far worse than a bungled surgery. Our mistakes will not bleed. Instead, they carry hidden scars whose mean and tragic consequence may not be seen until years have passed and remedy is painful and impossible."<sup>4</sup>

### **Obedience is a privilege**

Youth, do not feel oppressed by obedience. Obedience is a wonderful and a great privilege. In Abraham 4:18 it states, "And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed." What if the elements had not obeyed? They would have been damned or held back. So it is with us. Obedience to God is truly the only way to really

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be free and exercise our agency. Satan teaches the opposite and, with each wrong choice, binds us with chains. I promise you, obedience is a wonderful privilege.

### The joy of helping a parent

When I was a boy, my mother had to go to work at Garfield Smelter and work like a man to help support the seven children. She worked the graveyard shift as much as she could, I'm sure to be with us during the day. I don't know when the poor woman slept. One Saturday morning, she got off work about 7:00 or 8:00 A.M. She went to bed for a couple of hours and then got up. She had invited all her relatives to dinner. There must have been 35 or 40. She decorated the tables and arranged the chairs and put all the dishes and silverware out. She cooked and baked all day long. The dirty pots and pans and dishes stacked up.

Everyone came to dinner, and after dinner all the dirty dishes were brought into the kitchen. The food was cleared and stacked on the table and cupboards; then the kitchen door was closed and the family began to visit. It was about 8:00 P.M.

I remember standing all alone in the kitchen. In my young mind, I thought, "My mother worked all night; she has worked all day to get this dinner. When everyone leaves, she will have to do the dishes and put the food away. It will take two or three hours, and that's not fair." Then I thought, "I will do them."

I washed the dishes, did the silverware, the glassware. We didn't have an electric dishwasher; ours was a manual dishwasher, and that night I was manual. I used a half-dozen dish towels. I was drenched from head to foot. I put the food away, cleaned off the table and drainboards, then got down on my hands and knees and scrubbed the floor. When I was finished, I thought the kitchen was immaculate. It took about three hours.

Then I heard the chairs shuffling, and everyone left. The front door closed, and I heard my mother coming to the kitchen. I was pleased and thought she would be. The door swung open, and even at the age of 11, I recognized that she was startled. She looked around the kitchen, looked at me, and then there was a look I didn't recognize at the time. I do now. It was something like, "Thanks. I am tired. I think you understand, and I love you." She came over and hugged me. There was a light in her eye and a warmth in my heart. I learned it is a wonderful feeling to turn on the lights in our parents' eyes.

### Yearning for a Thanksgiving prayer

Another time—it was the Sunday before Thanksgiving, about 1943—I went to priesthood meeting. There was a large framed board. It had the pictures of all the young men serving in the military. Priests who had been at the sacrament table a few months earlier were now in the war. Each week it would be updated. Those who were killed in action had a gold star by their picture; those who had been wounded, a red star; and those missing in action, a white star. Every week, as a 12-year-old deacon, I checked to see who had been killed or wounded.

In quorum meeting that morning, the member of the bishopric said, "This Thursday is Thanksgiving. We ought to all have family prayer in our homes." Then he said, "Let's put on the blackboard the things we are grateful for." We did, and he said, "Include these things in your Thanksgiving prayer." I got sick to my stomach, as we never had a prayer or blessing.

That night at 6:30 we went to sacrament meeting. At the end of the meeting, the bishop stood up and was very tender. He told about the young men from our ward who had been killed and wounded. He talked about our liberty, our free-

dom, our flag, and this great country, and our blessings. Then he said, "I'd hope every single family would kneel and have family prayer on Thanksgiving Day and thank God for His blessings."

My heart ached. I thought, "How can we have family prayer?" I wanted to be obedient. I hardly slept all Sunday night. I wanted to have a prayer for Thanksgiving. I even thought I would say it if someone asked me, but I was too shy to volunteer. I worried all day Monday, and all day Tuesday, and Wednesday at school.

Dad did not come home on Wednesday until early in the morning. Thursday we all got up. There were five boys and two sisters. We skipped breakfast so we would have a real appetite for Thanksgiving dinner. To work up an appetite, we went to a nearby field and dug a hole six feet deep and six feet wide. We made a trench to it as a hideout. I remember with every shovelful of dirt, I thought, "Please, Heavenly Father, let us have a prayer."

Finally at 2:30, my mother called us to come and eat. We cleaned up and sat at the table. Somehow Mom had managed to have a turkey with all the trimmings. She put all the food on the table, including the turkey. I thought my heart would burst. Time was running out. I looked at my father, then my mother. I thought, "Please, now, someone, anyone, please can't we have a prayer." I was almost panicky; then all of a sudden everyone started to eat. I had worked hard all morning and afternoon to work up an appetite, but I wasn't hungry. I didn't want to eat. I wanted to pray more than anything else in this world, and it was too late.

Beloved youth, be grateful for parents who have prayer and read the scriptures. Prize family home evening. Be grateful for those who teach and train you.

### Stand for truth; carry the torch

My young friends, there is so much that is wonderful and worthwhile in this grand world. I love President Hinckley's constant reference to the love and confidence, the greatness that he feels in you, our beloved youth.

Prepare to go to the temple. A wonderful verse describes it:

Enter this door as if the floor . . .  
were gold;  
And every wall of jewels all of wealth  
untold;  
As if a choir in robes of fire were  
singing here;  
Nor shout nor rush but hush . . . for  
God is here.<sup>5</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith taught: "After we have done all we could do for the cause of truth, and withstood the evil that men have brought upon us, and we have been overwhelmed by their wrongs, it is still our duty to stand. We cannot give up; we must not lie down. Great causes are not won in a single generation."<sup>6</sup>

Young men and young women, raise the standard; carry the torch for your generation. We have absolute confidence you will.

I thank God for the one link that still holds, the one light that will not go out. Remember how blessed you are to have prayer in your homes. And always try to put lights in your mothers' eyes. That's the least we can all do for them.

We love you, our beloved youth, and pray God to bless each one of you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. *Rudyard Kipling's Verse* (1935), 559.
3. Conversation with Brit McConkie.
4. "A Friend of Mine: Notes on the Gift of Teaching," *Vital Speeches*, 15 July 1988, 615.

5. Poem by Orson F. Whitney; quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, "The Things of

Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?" *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 7.

6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 119.

## Elder Neil L. Andersen

### Serve the Lord; follow the prophet

I express my love to you this morning. I speak to the devoted and testimony-filled members of the Church spread across the nations of the earth. The very fact that on this beautiful Saturday morning you are here in the Tabernacle, or watching this conference in some other darkened room in the middle of the day, speaks of your discipleship. You are serious about what you believe, and it shows in your life.

One admonition that has been a strength to me is the powerful declaration of the Prophet Joshua, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

The words of Joshua ring with such relevance today, and yet how we demonstrate our decision to serve the Lord seems to change with each generation. Thirty-five hundred years ago as Joshua spoke, it meant leaving behind false gods, going to battle against the Canaanites, and following with sharp attention the words of the prophet. We can almost hear the whining of the skeptics as Joshua announced his battle plans for taking the city of Jericho. First, he said, they would quietly, without any speaking, circle the city one time for each of six days. Then on the seventh day they would compass the city seven times. Following, the priests would blow the trumpets, and at that time all the people would shout with a great shout. Then, Joshua assured them, the walls would come down. (See Joshua 6.) When the walls came down, the skeptics were quiet.

In our world today, one thing has not changed since Joshua spoke: Those who choose to serve the Lord will always listen attentively and specifically to the prophet. In modern Israel, serving the Lord means carefully following the prophets.

### Spiritual mole crickets

The challenges that face us and our families as disciples of Christ are somewhat different than those of Joshua's Israelites. Let me illustrate with an experience. Our family lived for many years in the state of Florida. Because Florida has a high concentration of sand, lawns there are planted with a large broadleaf grass we call Saint Augustine. A formidable enemy of a Florida lawn is a small, brown insect called a mole cricket.

One evening as my neighbor and I stood on the front steps, he noticed a little bug crossing my sidewalk. "You better spray your lawn," he warned. "There goes a mole cricket." I had sprayed the lawn with insecticide not too many weeks previously, and I hardly felt that I had the time or money to do it again so soon.

In the light of the next morning, I examined my lawn closely. It was lush and beautifully green. I looked down into the grass to see if I could see any of the little bugs. I could see none. I remember thinking, "Well, maybe that little mole cricket was just passing through my yard on the way to my neighbor's yard."

I watched my lawn for more than a week, looking for signs of invaders, but none was evident. I congratulated myself