

## President Boyd K. Packer

### Speaking plainly to youth

I respond to a prompting I have had for a very long time to speak to the youth of the Church, who face challenges unknown to us in our youth.

President J. Reuben Clark described our youth as “hungry for things of the spirit; they are eager to learn the Gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted.

“They want to know about . . . our beliefs; they want to gain testimonies of their truth; they are not now doubters but inquirers, seekers after truth. . . .

“. . . You do not have to sneak up behind [these] spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in [their] ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with [them] . . . ; you can bring these truths to [them] openly. . . . Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. There is no need for gradual approaches” (“The Charted Course of the Church in Education” [address to Church educators, 8 Aug. 1938]; in Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently*, rev. ed. [1991], 365, 373–74).

I agree with President Clark and will speak plainly to the youth about things I have learned and know to be true.

### Patriarchal blessing’s counsel about body

When I was 18, I was called into military service. I had not received my patriarchal blessing, so the bishop recommended me to a patriarch near the air base.

Patriarch J. Roland Sandstrom of the Santa Ana California Stake gave me my blessing. In it I was told this:

“You made a free and willing decision to abide by the laws of Eternal Progress as outlined by our elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. You . . . have been . . . given a physical body with which you might experience Earth Life, . . . a body of such physical proportions and fitness as to enable your spirit to function through it unhampered by physical impediments. . . .

Cherish this as a great heritage” (patriarchal blessing of Boyd K. Packer, 15 Jan. 1944, 1).

That was a great comfort to me. Because of childhood polio, I was not able to participate in sports and was left with a feeling of inferiority when compared to my friends.

My patriarchal blessing counseled: “Guard and protect [your body]—take nothing into it that shall harm the organs thereof because it is sacred. It is the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character.”

I found in the Word of Wisdom a principle with a promise:

The principle: Care for your body; avoid habit-forming stimulants, tea, coffee, tobacco, liquor, and drugs (see D&C 89:3–9). Such addictive things do little more than relieve a craving which they caused in the first place.

The promise: Those who obey will receive better health (see D&C 89:18) and “great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19).

### Body is the foundation of our character

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man. . . . All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 181).

Even the severe tests of health or a handicapped or disabled body can refine a soul for the glorious day of restoration and healing which surely will come.

Your body really *is* the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character.

### Importance of dress and grooming

President Harold B. Lee taught of the important symbolic and actual effect of how we dress and groom our bodies. If you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit of our Father in Heaven and exercise a wholesome influence upon those around you. To be unkempt in your appearance exposes you to influences that are degrading (see *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 220).

Avoid immodest clothing. Dress and groom to show the Lord that you know how precious your body is.

President Hinckley has warned you not to decorate your body with pictures or symbols that will never wash off or to pierce your body with rings or jewelry after the manner of the world (see "Your Greatest Challenge, Mother," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 99).

You would not paint a temple with dark pictures or symbols or graffiti or even initials. Do not do so with your body.

"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

### Proper use of sacred procreative power

There is in your body the supernal power to create life. Boys grow up to be men and may become fathers; girls grow up to be women and may become mothers. Natural and good feelings draw men and women together.

"All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

"Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and . . . the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

You should be attracted to one another and to marry. Then, and only then, may you worthily respond to the strong and good and constant desire to express that love through which children will bless your lives. By commandment of God our Father, that must happen only between husband and wife—man and woman—committed to one another in the covenant of marriage (see 1 Corinthians 7:2; D&C 42:22). To do otherwise is forbidden and will bring sorrow.

It is about controlling these natural desires that the strictest commandments are given in the revelations (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:5; Mormon 9:28).

Young men and women, keep yourselves worthy. Stay away from those environments, the music, the films, the videos, the clubs, and the associations that draw you into immoral conduct (see 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22; D&C 9:13).

### Danger of same-gender attraction

Now, I must speak of another danger, almost unknown in our youth but now everywhere about you. Normal desires and attractions emerge in the teenage years; there is the temptation to experiment, to tamper with the sacred power of procreation. These desires can be intensified, even perverted, by pornography,

improper music, or the encouragement from unworthy associations. What would have been only a more or less normal passing phase in establishing gender identity can become implanted and leave you confused, even disturbed.

If you consent, the adversary can take control of your thoughts and lead you carefully toward a habit and to an addiction, convincing you that immoral, unnatural behavior is a fixed part of your nature.

With some few, there is the temptation which seems nearly overpowering for man to be attracted to man or woman to woman. The scriptures plainly condemn those who "dishonour their own bodies between themselves: . . . men with men working that which is unseemly" (Romans 1:24, 27) or "women [who] change the natural use into that which is against nature" (Romans 1:26).

The gates of freedom, and the good or bad beyond, swing open or closed to the password *choice*. You are free to choose a path that may lead to despair, to disease, even to death (see 2 Nephi 2:26–27).

If you choose that course, the fountains of life may dry up. You will not experience the combination of love and struggle, the pain and pleasure, the disappointment and sacrifice, that love which, blended together in parenthood, exalts a man or a woman and leads to that fulness of joy spoken of in the scriptures (see 2 Nephi 2:25; 9:18; D&C 11:13; 42:61; 101:36).

Do not experiment; do not let anyone of either gender touch your body to awaken passions that can flame beyond control. It begins as an innocent curiosity; Satan influences your thoughts, and it becomes a pattern, a habit, which may imprison you in an addiction, to the sorrow and disappointment of those who love you (see John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:12–14, 18–19).

Pressure is put upon legislatures to legalize unnatural conduct. They can

never make right that which is forbidden in the laws of God (see Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:9–10).

### **We reject the sin but love the sinner**

Sometimes we are asked why we do not recognize this conduct as a diverse and acceptable lifestyle. This we cannot do. We did not make the laws; they were made in heaven "before the foundation of the world" (D&C 132:5; 124:41; see also Alma 22:13). We are servants only.

Just as with the prophets in ancient times, we have been "consecrated priests and teachers of this people, . . . [responsible to] magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence" (Jacob 1:18–19).

We understand why some feel we reject them. That is not true. We *do not* reject you, only immoral behavior. We *cannot* reject you, for you are the sons and daughters of God. We *will not* reject you, because we love you (see Hebrews 12:6–9; Romans 3:19; Helaman 15:3; D&C 95:1).

You may even feel that we do not love you. That also is not true. Parents know, and one day you will know, that there are times when parents and we who lead the Church must extend *tough* love when failing to teach and to warn and to discipline is to destroy.

We did not make the rules; they were revealed as commandments. We do not cause nor can we prevent the consequences if you disobey the moral laws (see D&C 101:78). In spite of criticism or opposition, we must teach and we must warn.

### **Counsel on resisting unnatural desires**

When any unworthy desires press into your mind, fight them, resist them,

control them (see James 4:6–8; 2 Nephi 9:39; Mosiah 3:19). The Apostle Paul taught, “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; see also D&C 62:1).

That may be a struggle from which you will not be free in this life. If you do not act on temptations, you need feel no guilt. They may be extremely difficult to resist. But that is better than to yield and bring disappointment and unhappiness to you and those who love you.

Some think that God created them with overpowering, unnatural desires, that they are trapped and not responsible (see James 1:13–15). That is not true. It cannot be true. Even if they were to accept it as true, they must remember that He can cure and He can heal (see Alma 7:10–13; 15:8).

### Repenting of moral transgressions

Now, what of you who have already made mistakes or have lost yourselves to an immoral lifestyle? What hope do you have? Are you cast off and lost forever?

These are not unforgivable sins. However unworthy or unnatural or immoral these transgressions may be, they are not unforgivable (see D&C 42:25). When completely forsaken and fully repented of, there can open the purifying gift of forgiveness, and the burden of guilt will be erased. There is a way back—long, perhaps; hard, certainly; possible, of course! (see Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:7; Mosiah 4:2; 26:29; D&C 1:31–32; 58:42; 61:2).

You need not, you cannot find your way alone. You have a Redeemer. The Lord will lift your burden if you choose to repent and turn from your sins and do

them no more. That is what the Atonement of Christ was for.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

The choice rests with you; you are not cast off forever. I repeat, these transgressions are not unforgivable.

One may think, “It is too late; my life will soon be over, and I am eternally doomed.” Not so, for “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Just as the physical body can be cleansed and healed, so can the spirit be washed clean by the power of the Atonement. The Lord will lift you and carry your burden during the suffering and struggle required to make you clean. That is what the Atonement of Christ is all about. He said, “I, the Lord, [will] remember [your sins] no more” (D&C 58:42; see also Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; Alma 36:19).

### Stay in the Lord’s way

Our beloved, precious youth, stay in the Lord’s way. If you stumble, rise up; go on. If you have lost your way, we open our arms and await your return.

God be praised for the cleansing, purifying, forgiving power of the Atonement brought by the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom I bear witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy.