

14. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15.
15. Romans 8:17; italics added.
16. Alma 42:8.
17. Moses 5:11.
18. 2 Nephi 9:43.
19. Alma 28:8.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 18:13; italics added.
21. Alma 5:57.
22. See Matthew 19:16–22.
23. Hebrews 12:2; see also Moroni 6:4.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 97:8; italics added.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 30:6.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:53.
27. Philippians 3:10.
28. Moroni 7:48; 1 John 3:2; italics added.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### **A time of great challenges, opportunities**

Excellent suggestions to combat the deteriorating world environment have been given in this conference. As a prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley put world conditions and our opportunities into crystal-clear perspective. Two of his recent comments to priesthood and auxiliary leaders illustrate that prophetic vision. First, regarding the challenge we face:

“The traditional family is under heavy attack. I do not know that things were worse in the times of Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . We see similar conditions today. They prevail all across the world. I think our Father must weep as He looks down upon His wayward sons and daughters.”<sup>1</sup>

Now concerning our extraordinary opportunities:

“Who in the earlier days could have dreamed of this season of opportunity in which we live? . . . The Church is in wonderful condition. . . . It will grow and strengthen. . . . It is our opportunity and our challenge to continue in this great undertaking, the future of which we can scarcely imagine.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Much evil and darkness in the world**

You have a choice. You can wring your hands and be consumed with concern for the future, or you can choose to use the counsel the Lord has given to live with

peace and happiness in a world awash with evil. If you choose to concentrate on the dark side, this is what you will see. Much of the world is being engulfed in a rising river of degenerate filth, with the abandonment of virtue, righteousness, personal integrity, traditional marriage, and family life. Sodom and Gomorrah were the epitome of unholy life in the Old Testament. It was isolated then; now that condition is spread over the world. Satan skillfully manipulates the power of all types of media and communication. His success has greatly increased the extent and availability of such degrading and destructive influences worldwide. In the past, some effort was required to seek out such evil. Now it saturates significant portions of virtually every corner of the world. We cannot dry up the mounting river of evil influences, for they result from the exercise of moral agency divinely granted by our Father. But we can and must, with clarity, warn of the consequences of getting close to its enticing, destructive current.

### **Plan of happiness blesses all who live it**

Now the brighter side. Despite pockets of evil, the world overall is majestically beautiful, filled with many good and sincere people. God has provided a way to live in this world and not be contaminated by the degrading pressures evil agents spread throughout it. You can live a vir-

tuous, productive, righteous life by following the plan of protection created by your Father in Heaven: His plan of happiness. It is contained in the scriptures and in the inspired declarations of His prophets. He clothed your intelligence with spirit and made it possible for you to enjoy the wonder of a physical body. When you use that body in the way He has decreed, you will grow in strength and capacity, avoid transgression, and be abundantly blessed.

When God, our Eternal Father, and His Beloved Son appeared to Joseph Smith in that sublime vision in the Sacred Grove, They began to place on earth again that plan of happiness and all required to sustain it. Part of that restoration included additional sacred scriptures to complement the treasured record of the Bible. These precious scriptures are contained in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Our Father knew of our day. He prepared the scriptures and provided continuing divine guidance to sustain us. That help will ensure that you can live with peace and happiness amid increasing evil.

Consider these verses:

“All things must come to pass in their time. [God knew the challenges we would face when He gave this counsel.]

“Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

“Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.”<sup>3</sup>

That is a priceless promise. As you continue to center your mind and heart in Him, He will help you have a rich and full life no matter what happens in the world around you.

Paul wisely taught, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”<sup>4</sup>

We should emulate Joshua: “Choose [ye] this day whom ye will serve; . . . as

for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus taught: “Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days.”<sup>6</sup> “He who is faithful shall overcome all things, and shall be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>7</sup>

Finally this pattern of success: “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, . . . deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, . . . that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

I know that the plan of happiness can lift and bless those who live it anywhere.

### **Taking the gospel to Quiriza, Bolivia**

On Christmas Eve 37 years ago, in the light of a full moon, I climbed a small hill in the isolated village of Quiriza, Bolivia. Four young elders and I had spent the day crossing over a mountain pass on a treacherous road. Then we struggled up a riverbed to see if the teachings of the Savior would help a destitute people. What we saw was discouraging—undernourished children, adults subsisting on meager crops, some with eyes glazed from seeking refuge in alcohol and drugs. I looked at the tiny, barren village below—a cluster of adobe, thatched-roof houses beaten by the harsh environment. The only evidence of life was barking dogs searching for food. There was no electricity, telephone, running water, roads, proper sanitation, or doctors there. It seemed so hopeless. Yet a solemn prayer confirmed that we should be there. We found a humble people who embraced the restored gospel with determination to live it. They did that under harsh conditions where severe poverty, alcohol, drugs, witchcraft, and immorality were in plentiful supply.

Under the guidance of exceptional missionaries, the people learned to work hard to cultivate the fields. They produced

a harvest of nutritious vegetables and raised rabbits for better protein. But the best lessons came from beloved missionaries who taught them of a God who loved them, of a Savior who gave His life that they might succeed. Their physical appearance began to change. The light of truth radiated from their happy faces. As devoted, loving emissaries of the Lord, missionaries patiently taught truth to a willing people. Wives and husbands learned how to live in harmony, teach truth to their children, pray, and sense the guidance of the Spirit.

I watched a six-year-old boy who had carefully observed our first baptismal service act out with his younger sister what he had seen. He carefully arranged her hands, raised his tiny arm to the square, mumbled words, gently lowered her into a depression in the sun-baked earth, led her to a rock where he confirmed her, then shook her hand.

The youth learned most quickly. They became obedient to the light of truth taught by the missionaries and in time by their own parents. Through their faith and obedience, I have seen how in one generation, youth baptized in that village have overcome a seemingly hopeless future. Some have been missionaries, graduated from universities, and been sealed in the temple. Through their diligence and obedience, they have found purpose and success in life despite an early harsh physical and evil-saturated environment. If it can be done in Quiriza, Bolivia, it can be done anywhere.

### **Violating commandments leads to tragedy**

Have you noticed how Satan works to capture the mind and emotions with flashing images, blaring music, and the stimulation of every physical sense to excess? He diligently strives to fill life with action, entertainment, and stimulation so that one cannot ponder the consequences of his

tempting invitations. Think of it. Some are tempted to violate the most basic commandments of God because of seductive actions portrayed as acceptable. They are made to seem attractive, even desirable. There seems to be no serious consequence, but rather apparent lasting joy and happiness. But recognize that those performances are controlled by scripts and actors. The outcome of decisions made is likewise manipulated to be whatever the producer wants.

Life is not that way. Yes, moral agency allows you to choose what you will, but you cannot control the outcome of those choices. Unlike the false creations of man, our Father in Heaven determines the consequences of your choices. Obedience will yield happiness, while violation of His commandments will not.

Consider the lives of those who create what for some are captivating images of life. They generally turn to the most vicious of the destructive influences they depict so appealingly in the media. They may be wealthy, but they are miserable and without conscience. Truly the statement of Alma, an inspired prophet and compassionate father, is borne out in their lives: "Wickedness never was happiness."<sup>9</sup>

If you are ever tempted to experiment with the alluring offerings of Lucifer, first calmly analyze the inevitable consequences of such choices, and your life will not be shattered. You cannot ever sample those things that are forbidden of God as destructive of happiness and corrosive to spiritual guidance without tragic results.

If you have become entangled in sin from poor choices, please decide to come back now. You know how to begin. Do it now. We love you. We need you. God will help you.

### **God will guide you to happiness**

As a young man or woman, though life may seem difficult now, hold on to that

iron rod of truth. You are making better progress than you realize. Your struggles are defining character, discipline, and confidence in the promises of your Father in Heaven and the Savior as you consistently obey Their commandments. You are so important. You are so needed. There are so few willing to make the sacrifice you are making to live righteously. You can develop the sensitivity, love, and kindness to gain supreme happiness within the covenant of an eternal marriage. You will bless your children with insight the world can never give them. Your example will set the course for their successful life as the world becomes even more difficult. You are needed to strengthen the growing kingdom of the Lord and to be role models for so many who lack the light of truth you have.

Avoid worldly wickedness. Know that God is in control. In time, Satan will completely fail and be punished for his perverse evil. God has a specific plan for your life. He will reveal parts of that plan to you as you look for it with faith and consistent obedience. His Son has made you free—not from the consequences of your acts, but free to make choices. God’s eternal purpose is for you to be successful in this mortal life. No matter how wicked the world becomes, you can earn that blessing. Seek and be attentive to the personal guidance given to you through the Holy Spirit. Continue to be worthy to receive it. Reach out to others who stumble and are perplexed, not certain of what path to follow.

Your security is in God your Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. As one of His Apostles authorized to bear witness of Him, I solemnly testify that I know that

the Savior lives, that He is a resurrected, glorified personage of perfect love. He is your hope, your Mediator, your Redeemer. Through obedience, let Him guide you to peace and happiness amid increased evil in the world, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 3, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 4, 7.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 64:32–34.
4. Romans 12:21.
5. Joshua 24:15.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 24:8.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 75:16.
8. Moroni 10:32.
9. Alma 41:10.

#### President Monson

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the Relief Society choir from stakes in Salt Lake, the priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. The music has been wonderful. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “Lord, I Would Follow Thee.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Daryl H. Garn of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Resolve to stand a little taller

My brothers and sisters, it’s about over. As we conclude this historic confer-

ence, the words of Rudyard Kipling’s immortal “Recessional” come to mind:

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The captains and the kings depart.