

# Deceive Me Not

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As we obey God's commandments, we will always be led in the right way and will not be deceived.

Today, I offer words of counsel for everyone, but *especially* for you of the rising generation—Primary children, young men, and young women. You are deeply loved by the Lord's prophet for our day, President Russell M. Nelson—so much so that he spoke to many of you last year in a special worldwide youth devotional broadcast titled “Hope of Israel.”<sup>1</sup> We often hear President Nelson calling you exactly that—the “hope of Israel,” the rising generation and the future of the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

My young friends, I would like to begin by sharing two family stories.

## The 102nd Dalmatian

Years ago, I arrived home from work and was startled to see white paint splattered everywhere—on the ground, the garage door, and our red-brick house. I inspected the scene more closely and discovered the paint was still wet. A trail of paint led toward the backyard, and so I followed it. There, I found my five-year-old son with a paintbrush in his hand, chasing our dog. Our beautiful black Labrador was splattered almost half white!

“What are you doing?” I asked in an animated voice.

My son stopped, looked at me, looked at the dog, looked at the paintbrush dripping with paint, and said, “I just want him to look like the black-spotted dogs in the movie—you know, the one with 101 Dalmatians.”



I loved our dog. I thought he was perfect, but that day my son had a different idea.

## The Striped Kitty Cat

My second story centers around Great-Uncle Grover, who lived in a house out in the country, far from the city. Uncle Grover was getting very old. We thought our sons should meet him before he died. So, one afternoon, we took a long drive to his humble house. We sat together to visit and introduce him to our sons. Not long into the conversation, our two young boys, maybe five and six years old, wanted to go outside and play.

Uncle Grover, hearing their request, bent over with his face in theirs. His face was so weathered and unfamiliar that the boys were a little scared of him. He said to them, in his gravelly voice, “Be careful—there are a lot of skunks out there.” Hearing this, Lesa and I were more than startled; we were worried that they might get sprayed by a skunk! The boys soon went outside to play as we continued to visit.



Later, when we got in the car to go home, I inquired of the boys, “Did you see a skunk?” One of them replied, “No, we didn’t see any skunks, but we did see a black kitty cat with a white stripe on its back!”

## The Great Deceiver

These stories about innocent children discovering something about life and reality may make each of us smile, but they also illustrate a more profound concept.

In the first story, our young son had a beautiful dog as a pet; notwithstanding, he grabbed a gallon of paint and, with paintbrush in hand, determined to create his own imagined reality.

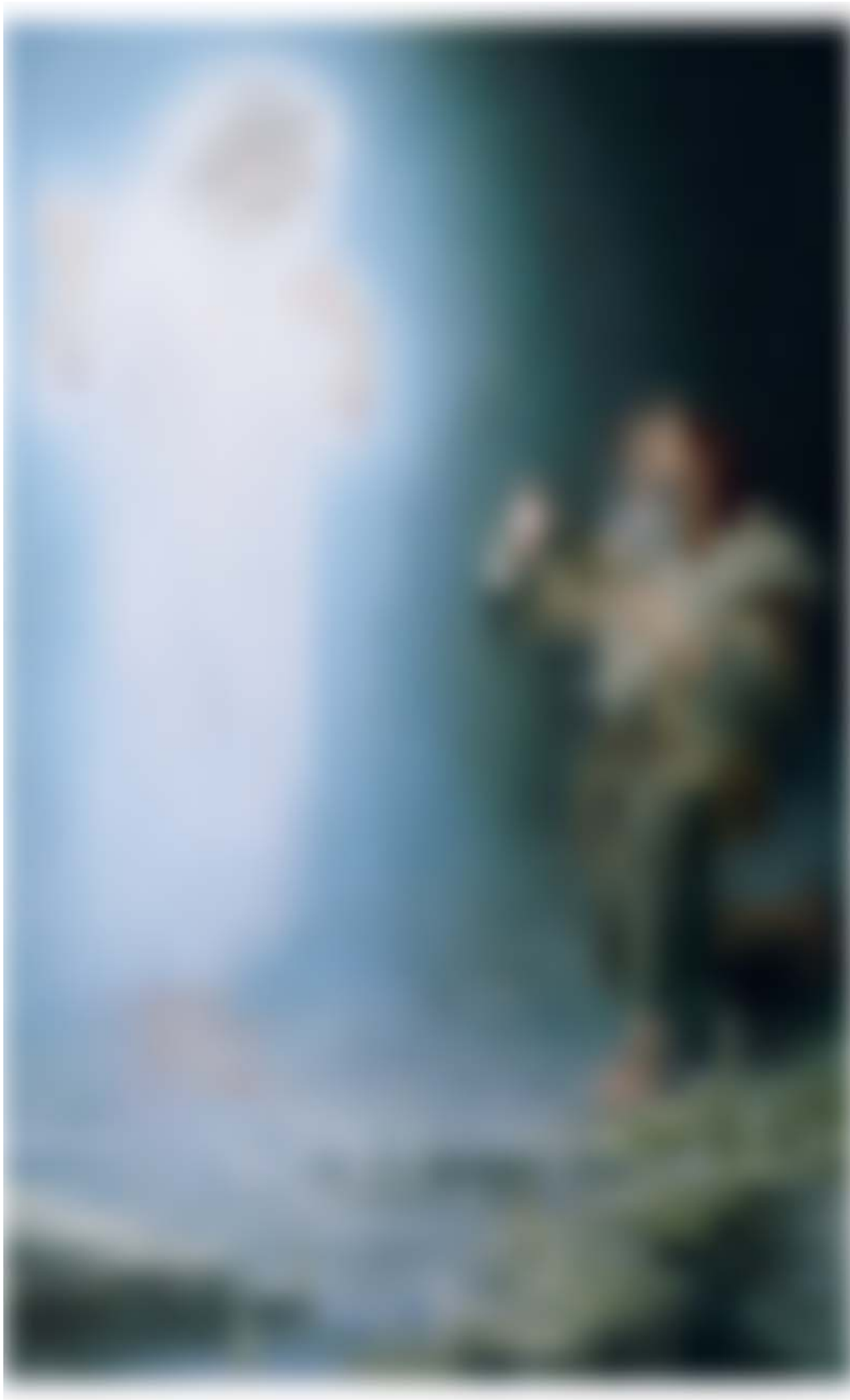
In the second account, the boys were blissfully unaware of the unsavory threat they faced from a skunk. Unable to properly identify what they had actually encountered, they ran the risk of suffering some unfortunate consequences. These are stories of mistaken identity—presuming the real thing to be something else. In each case, the consequences were minor.

However, many today grapple with these same issues on a much larger scale. They are either unable to see things as they truly are or are unsatisfied with truth. Moreover, there are forces at play today designed to deliberately lead us away from

absolute truth. These deceptions and lies go far beyond innocent mistaken identity and often have dire, not minor, consequences.

Satan, the father of lies and the great deceiver, would have us question things as they really are and either ignore eternal truths or replace them with something that appears more pleasing. “He maketh war with the saints of God”<sup>2</sup> and has spent millennia calculating and practicing the ability to persuade God’s children to believe that *good is evil* and *evil is good*.

He has made a reputation for himself convincing mortals that skunks are just kittens or that, with an application of paint, you can turn a Labrador into a Dalmatian!



Let's now turn to an example of this very principle found in the scriptures, when the Lord's prophet Moses came face-to-face with this same issue. "Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain[;] ... he saw God face to face, and he talked with him."<sup>3</sup> God taught Moses about his eternal identity. Though Moses was

mortal and imperfect, God taught that Moses was “in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten ... shall be the Savior.”<sup>4</sup>

To summarize, in this marvelous vision, Moses beheld God, and he also learned something important about himself: he was indeed a *son of God*.

Listen carefully to what happened as this wondrous vision closed. “And it came to pass that ... Satan came tempting him,” saying, “Moses, son of *man*, worship me!”<sup>5</sup> Moses courageously replied: “Who art *thou*? For behold, I am a son of *God*, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is *thy* glory, that I should worship *thee*?”<sup>6</sup>

In other words, Moses said: “You cannot deceive me, for I know who I am. I was created in the image of God. You don’t have His light and glory. So why should I worship you or fall prey to your deception?”

Now pay attention to how Moses further responds. He declares, “Get thee hence, Satan; *deceive me not*.”<sup>7</sup>

There is much we can learn from Moses’s mighty response to temptation from the adversary. I invite you to respond the same way when you feel influenced by temptation. Command the enemy of your soul by saying: “Go away! You have *no* glory. Do not tempt or lie to me! For I know I am a child of God. And I will always call upon my God for His help.”

The adversary, however, does not easily abandon his destructive motives to deceive and demean us. He certainly did not do so with Moses, instead desiring to cause Moses to forget who he was eternally.

As if he were throwing a childish tantrum, “Satan cried with a loud voice, and ranted upon the earth, and commanded, saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me.”<sup>8</sup>

Let’s review. Did you hear what he just said? “I am the Only Begotten. Worship *me*!”

The great deceiver said, in effect, “Don’t worry; I won’t harm you—I’m not a skunk; I am just an innocent black-and-white kitty cat.”



Moses then called upon God and received His divine strength. Even though the adversary trembled and the earth shook, Moses *did not yield*. His voice was certain and clear. “Depart from me, Satan,” he declared, “for this one God only will I worship, which is the God of glory.”<sup>9</sup>

Finally, he “departed ... from the presence of Moses.”<sup>10</sup>

After the Lord appeared and blessed Moses for his obedience, the Lord said:

“Blessed art thou, Moses, for ... thou shalt be made stronger than many waters. ...

“And lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days.”<sup>11</sup>

Moses’s resistance of the adversary is a vivid and enlightening example for each of us, no matter our stage in life. It is a powerful message for you personally—to know what to do when he tries to deceive you. For you, like Moses, have been blessed with the gift of heavenly help.

## Commandments and Blessings

How might you find this heavenly help, even as Moses did, and not be deceived or give in to temptation? A clear channel for divine assistance was reaffirmed in this dispensation by the Lord Himself when He declared: “Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments.”<sup>12</sup> Using simpler words, we might say that the Lord, who knows “the end from the beginning,”<sup>13</sup> knows the unique difficulties of our day. Therefore, He has provided a way for us to resist challenges and temptations, many of which come as a direct result of the deceitful influences of the adversary and his attacks.



The way is simple. Through His servants, God speaks to us, His children, and gives us commandments. We could restate the verse I just quoted to say, “I the Lord ... called upon my servant [President Russell M. Nelson], and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments.” Isn’t that a glorious truth?

I bear solemn witness that the Lord did in all reality speak to Joseph Smith from heaven, beginning with the grand First Vision. He also speaks to President Nelson in our time. I testify that God communed with prophets in past ages and gave them commandments designed to lead His children to happiness in this life and glory in the next.

God continues to give commandments to our living prophet today. Examples abound—a more home-centered, Church-supported balance in gospel instruction; the replacement of home and visiting teaching with ministering; adjustments to temple procedures and ordinances; and the new Children and Youth program. I marvel at the goodness and compassion of a loving Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, who restored the Savior’s Church to earth once again and have called a prophet in our day. The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ offsets *perilous* times with the *fulness* of times.

## Wickedness Never Was Happiness

Obedience to commandments given to our prophet is a key not only in avoiding the influence of the deceiver but also in experiencing lasting joy and happiness. This divine formula is rather simple: righteousness, or obedience to commandments, brings blessings, and blessings bring happiness, or joy, into our lives.

However, in the same way that the adversary tried to deceive Moses, he seeks to trick you. He has always pretended to be something that he is not. He always attempts to hide who he truly is. He claims that obedience will make your life miserable and that it will rob you of happiness.

Can you think of some of his ploys to deceive? For instance, he disguises the destructive consequences of illicit drugs or drinking and instead suggests that it will bring pleasure. He immerses us in the various negative elements that can exist in social media, including debilitating comparisons and idealized reality. In addition, he camouflages other dark, harmful content found online, such as pornography, blatant attacks on others through cyberbullying, and sowing misinformation to cause doubt and fear in our hearts and minds. Cunningly he whispers, “Just follow me, and you will surely be happy.”

The words written so many centuries ago by a Book of Mormon prophet are especially relevant for our day: “Wickedness *never* was happiness.”<sup>14</sup> May we recognize Satan’s deceptions for what they are. May we withstand and see through the lies and influences of the one who seeks to destroy our souls and steal from us our present joy and future glory.



My dear brothers and sisters, we must continue to be faithful and vigilant, for so is the only way to discern truth and to hear the voice of the Lord through His servants. “For the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. ... These things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls. ... For God also spake them unto prophets of old.”<sup>15</sup> We are the Saints of Almighty God, the hope of Israel! Will we falter? “Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No! ... To God’s command, soul, heart, and hand, faithful and true we will ever stand.”<sup>16</sup>

I bear my witness of the *Holy One of Israel*—even the name of Jesus Christ. I testify of His abiding love, truth, and joy that are made possible by His infinite and eternal sacrifice. As we obey His commandments, we will always be led in the right way and will not be deceived. In the sacred name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.