THE ETERNAL FAMILY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO
THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION
TO THE WORLD

The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

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.

In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

The First Commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan.

Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. “Children are an heritage of the Lord” (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.
The Eternal Family - Unit 6 Packet Contents

Unit 6: Protect The Family (Proclamation Paragraphs 8 & 9)

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

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1. What doctrines or principles were you taught that you consider foundational to this Unit?

2. What impressions came to you? What were you taught during this large group session?

3. What questions will you ask in following class periods that will invite increased learning on this topic?
Alma 46:12
12 And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (12)
10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.
13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Romans 1:16
16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

D&C 134:1-5
1 We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society.
2 We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.
3 We believe that all governments necessarily require civil officers and magistrates to enforce the laws of the same; and that such as will administer the law in equity and justice should be sought for and upheld by the voice of the people if a republic, or the will of the sovereign.
4 We believe that religion is instituted of God; and that men are amenable to him, and to him only, for the exercise of it, unless their religious opinions prompt them to infringe upon the rights and liberties of others; but we do not believe that human law has a right to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men, nor dictate forms for public or private devotion; that the civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience; should punish guilt, but never suppress the freedom of the soul.
5 We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience.

D&C 101:44-64 – Watchman on the Tower
44 A certain nobleman had a spot of land, very choice; and he said unto his servants: Go ye unto my vineyard, even upon this very choice piece of land, and plant twelve olive trees;
45 And set watchmen round about them, and build a tower, that one may overlook the land round about, to be a watchman upon the tower, that mine olive trees may not be broken down when the enemy shall come to spoil and take upon themselves the fruit of my vineyard.
46 Now, the servants of the nobleman went and did as their lord commanded them, and planted the olive trees, and built a hedge round about, and set watchmen, and began to build a tower.
47 And while they were yet laying the foundation thereof, they began to say among themselves: And what need hath my lord of this tower?
48 And consulted for a long time, saying among themselves: And what need hath my lord of this tower?
49 Might not this money be given to the exchangers? For there is no need of these things.
50 And while they were at variance one with another they became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord.
51 And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants of the nobleman arose and were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works, and broke down the olive trees.
52 Now, behold, the nobleman, the lord of the vineyard, called upon his servants, and said unto them, Why! what is the cause of this great evil?
53 Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you, and—after ye had planted the vineyard, and built the hedge round about, and set watchmen upon the walls thereof—built the tower also, and set a watchman upon the tower, and
watched for my vineyard, and not have fallen asleep, lest the enemy should come upon you?

54 And behold, the watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer.

55 And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry;

56 And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money.

57 Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land; break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen.

58 And inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies, that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.

59 And the servant said unto his lord: When shall these things be?

60 And he said unto his servant: When I will; go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you;

61 And this shall be my seal and blessing upon you—a faithful and wise steward in the midst of mine house, a ruler in my kingdom.

62 And his servant went straightway, and did all things whatsoever his lord commanded him; and after many days all things were fulfilled.

63 Again, verily I say unto you, I will show unto you wisdom in me concerning all the churches, inasmuch as they are willing to be guided in a right and proper way for their salvation—

64 That the work of the gathering together of my saints may continue, that I may build them up unto my name upon holy places; for the time of harvest is come, and my word must needs be fulfilled.
1. None should resist the plea that we unite to increase our concern for the welfare and future of our children—the rising generation.

2. We can all remember our feelings when a little child cried out and reached up to us for help. A loving Heavenly Father gives us those feelings to impel us to help His children. Please recall those feelings as I speak about our responsibility to protect and act for the well-being of children.

3. I speak from the perspective of the gospel of Jesus Christ, including His plan of salvation. That is my calling. Local Church leaders have responsibility for a single jurisdiction, like a ward or stake, but an Apostle is responsible to witness to the entire world. In every nation, of every race and creed, all children are children of God.

4. Although I do not speak in terms of politics or public policy, like other Church leaders, I cannot speak for the welfare of children without implications for the choices being made by citizens, public officials, and workers in private organizations. We are all under the Savior’s command to love and care for each other and especially for the weak and defenseless.

5. Children are highly vulnerable. They have little or no power to protect or provide for themselves and little influence on so much that is vital to their well-being. Children need others to speak for them, and they need decision makers who put their well-being ahead of selfish adult interests.

6. Worldwide, we are shocked at the millions of children victimized by evil adult crimes and selfishness.

7. In some war-torn countries, children are abducted to serve as soldiers in contending armies.

8. A United Nations report estimates that over two million children are victimized each year through prostitution and pornography.¹

9. From the perspective of the plan of salvation, one of the most serious abuses of children is to deny them birth. This is a worldwide trend. The national birthrate in the United States is the lowest in 25 years,² and the birthrates in most European and Asian countries have been below replacement levels for many years. This is not just a religious issue. As rising generations diminish in numbers, cultures and even nations are hollowed out and eventually disappear.

10. One cause of the diminishing birthrate is the practice of abortion. Worldwide, there are estimated to be more than 40 million abortions per year.³ Many laws permit or even promote abortion, but to us this is a great evil. Other abuses of children that occur during pregnancy are the fetal impairments that result from the mother’s inadequate nutrition or drug use.

11. There is a tragic irony in the multitude of children eliminated or injured before birth while throngs of infertile couples long for and seek babies to adopt.

12. Childhood abuses or neglect of children that occur after birth are more publicly visible. Worldwide, almost eight million children die before their fifth birthday, mostly from diseases both treatable and preventable.⁴ And the World Health Organization reports that one in four children have stunted growth, mentally and physically, because of inadequate nutrition.⁵ Living and traveling internationally, we Church leaders see much of this. The general presidency of the Primary report children living in conditions “beyond our imaginations.” A mother in the Philippines said: “Sometimes we do not have enough money for food, but that is all right because it gives me the opportunity to teach my children about faith. We gather and pray for relief, and the children see the Lord bless us.” In South Africa, a Primary worker met a little girl, lonely and sad. In faint responses to loving questions, she said she had no mother, no father, and no grandmother—only a grandfather to care for her.⁷ Such tragedies are common on a continent where many caregivers have died of AIDS.

13. Even in rich nations little children and youth are impaired by neglect. Children growing up in poverty have inferior health care and inadequate
educational opportunities. They are also exposed to dangerous environments in their physical and cultural surroundings and even from the neglect of their parents. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland recently shared the experience of an LDS police officer. In an investigation he found five young children huddled together and trying to sleep without bedding on a filthy floor in a dwelling where their mother and others were drinking and partying. The apartment had no food to relieve their hunger. After tucking the children into a makeshift bed, the officer knelt and prayed for their protection. As he walked toward the door, one of them, about six, pursued him, grabbed him by the hand, and pleaded, “Will you please adopt me?”

14. We remember our Savior’s teaching as He placed a little child before His followers and declared:

15. “And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

16. “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:5–6).

17. When we consider the dangers from which children should be protected, we should also include psychological abuse. Parents or other caregivers or teachers or peers who demean, bully, or humiliate children or youth can inflict harm more permanent than physical injury. Making a child or youth feel worthless, unloved, or unwanted can inflict serious and long-lasting injury on his or her emotional well-being and development. Young people struggling with any exceptional condition, including same-gender attraction, are particularly vulnerable and need loving understanding—not bullying or ostracism.

18. With the help of the Lord, we can repent and change and be more loving and helpful to children—our own and those around us.

19. There are few examples of physical or emotional threats to children as important as those arising out of their relationships with their parents or guardians. President Thomas S. Monson has spoken of what he called the “vile deeds” of child abuse, where a parent has broken or disfigured a child, physically or emotionally. I grieved as I had to study the shocking evidence of such cases during my service on the Utah Supreme Court.

20. Of utmost importance to the well-being of children is whether their parents were married, the nature and duration of the marriage, and, more broadly, the culture and expectations of marriage and child care where they live. Two scholars of the family explain: “Throughout history, marriage has first and foremost been an institution for procreation and raising children. It has provided the cultural tie that seeks to connect the father to his children by binding him to the mother of his children. Yet in recent times, children have increasingly been pushed from center stage.”

21. A Harvard law professor describes the current law and attitude toward marriage and divorce: “The [current] American story about marriage, as told in the law and in much popular literature, goes something like this: marriage is a relationship that exists primarily for the fulfillment of the individual spouses. If it ceases to perform this function, no one is to blame and either spouse may terminate it at will. … Children hardly appear in the story; at most they are rather shadowy characters in the background.”

22. Our Church leaders have taught that looking “upon marriage as a mere contract that may be entered into at pleasure … and severed at the first difficulty … is an evil meriting severe condemnation,” especially where “children are made to suffer.” And children are impacted by divorces. Over half of the divorces in a recent year involved couples with minor children.

23. Many children would have had the blessing of being raised by both of their parents if only their parents had followed this inspired teaching in the family proclamation: “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. … Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another.” The most powerful teaching of children is by the example of their parents. Divorcing parents inevitably teach a negative lesson.

24. There are surely cases when a divorce is necessary for the good of the children, but those circumstances are exceptional. In most marital contests the contending parents should give much greater weight to the interests of the children. With the help of the Lord, they can do so. Children need the emotional and personal strength that come from being raised by two parents who are united in their marriage and their goals. As one who was raised by a widowed mother, I know firsthand that this cannot always be achieved, but it is the ideal to be sought whenever possible.

25. Children are the first victims of current laws permitting so-called “no-fault divorce.” From the standpoint of children, divorce is too easy. Summarizing decades of social science research, a careful scholar concluded that “the family structure that produces the best outcomes for children, on average, are two biological parents who remain married.” A New York Times writer noted
the striking fact that even as traditional marriage has declined in the United States ... the evidence has mounted for the institution's importance to the well-being of children.19 That reality should give important guidance to parents and parents-to-be in their decisions involving marriage and divorce. We also need politicians, policy makers, and officials to increase their attention to what is best for children in contrast to the selfish interests of voters and vocal advocates of adult interests.

26. Children are also victimized by marriages that do not occur. Few measures of the welfare of our rising generation are more disturbing than the recent report that 41 percent of all births in the United States were to women who were not married.20 Unmarried mothers have massive challenges, and the evidence is clear that their children are at a significant disadvantage when compared with children raised by married parents.21

27. Most of the children born to unmarried mothers—58 percent—were born to couples who were cohabitating.22 Whatever we may say about these couples’ forgoing marriage, studies show that their children suffer significant comparative disadvantages.23 For children, the relative stability of marriage matters.

28. We should assume the same disadvantages for children raised by couples of the same gender. The social science literature is controversial and politically charged on the long-term effect of this on children, principally because, as a New York Times writer observed, “same-sex marriage is a social experiment, and like most experiments it will take time to understand its consequences.”24

29. I have spoken for children—children everywhere. Some may reject some of these examples, but none should resist the plea that we unite to increase our concern for the welfare and future of our children—the rising generation.

30. We are speaking of the children of God, and with His powerful help, we can do more to help them. In this plea I address not only Latter-day Saints but also all persons of religious faith and others who have a value system that causes them to subordinate their own needs to those of others, especially to the welfare of children.25

31. Religious persons are also conscious of the Savior’s New Testament teaching that pure little children are our role models of humility and teachableness:

32. “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

33. “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3–4).

34. In the Book of Mormon we read of the risen Lord teaching the Nephites that they must repent and be baptized “and become as a little child” or they could not inherit the kingdom of God (3 Nephi 11:38; see also Moroni 8:10).

35. I pray that we will humble ourselves as little children and reach out to protect our little children, for they are the future for us, for our Church, and for our nations. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes
24. Douthat, “Gay Parents and the Marriage Debate.” The latest and most thorough study finds significant disadvantages reported by young adults with a parent who had same-sex relationships prior to the child’s turning age 18 (see Mark Regnerus, “How Different Are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study,” Social Science Research, vol. 41 [2012], 752–70).
25. Latter-day Saints are especially committed to parenthood as one of the most important goals in life (see Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life, Mormons in America: Certain in Their Beliefs, Uncertain of Their Place in Society, Jan. 12, 2012, 10, 16, 51).
1. This is Easter Sunday: a day of gratitude and remembrance honoring our Savior Jesus Christ's Atonement and Resurrection for all mankind. We worship Him, grateful for our freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and our God-given right of agency.

2. As prophets foretold about these latter days in which we live, there are many confused about who we are and what we believe. Some are “false accusers … [and] despisers of those that are good.” Others “call evil good, and good evil; [and] put darkness for light, and light for darkness.”

3. As those around us make choices about how to respond to our beliefs, we must not forget that moral agency is an essential part of God's plan for all His children. That eternal plan, presented to us in the premortal Council in Heaven, included the gift of agency.

4. In that Grand Council, Lucifer, known as Satan, used his agency to oppose God's plan. God said: “Because … Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, … I caused that he should be cast down.”

5. He continued: "And also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency."

6. As a result, Heavenly Father's spirit children who chose to reject His plan and follow Lucifer lost their divine destiny.

7. Jesus Christ, using His agency, said: "Here am I, send me." "Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."

8. Jesus, who exercised His agency to sustain Heavenly Father's plan, was identified and appointed by the Father as our Savior, foreordained to perform the atoning sacrifice for all. Similarly, our exercise of agency to keep the commandments enables us to fully understand who we are and receive all of the blessings our Heavenly Father has—including the opportunity to have a body, to progress, to experience joy, to have a family, and to inherit eternal life.

9. To keep the commandments, we need to know the official doctrine of the Church so we are not diverted from Christ's leadership by the ever-changing whims of individuals.

10. The blessings we enjoy now are because we made the choice to follow the Savior before this life. To everyone hearing or reading these words, whoever you are and whatever your past may be, remember this: it is not too late to make that same choice again and follow Him.

11. Through our faith in Jesus Christ, believing in His Atonement, repenting of our sins, and being baptized, we may then receive the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift provides knowledge and understanding, guidance and strength to learn and gain a testimony, power, cleansing to overcome sin, and comfort and encouragement to be faithful in tribulation. These incomparable blessings of the Spirit increase our freedom and power to do what is right, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

12. As we walk the path of spiritual liberty in these last days, we must understand that the faithful use of our agency depends upon our having religious freedom. We already know that Satan does not want this freedom to be ours. He attempted to destroy moral agency in heaven, and now on earth he is fiercely undermining, opposing, and spreading confusion about religious freedom—what it is and why it is essential to our spiritual life and our very salvation.

13. There are four cornerstones of religious freedom that we as Latter-day Saints must rely upon and protect.

14. The first is freedom to believe. No one should be criticized, persecuted, or attacked by individuals, or governments either, for what he or she believes about God. It is very personal and very important. An early declaration of our beliefs regarding religious liberty states:

15. "No government can exist in peace, except such laws are
famed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience. …

16. “... The civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience or suppress the freedom of the soul.”

17. This fundamental freedom of belief has since been acknowledged by the United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by other national and international human rights documents.

18. The second cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to share our faith and our beliefs with others. The Lord commands us, “Ye shall teach [the gospel to] your children … when thou sittest in thine house.” He also said to His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” As parents, full-time missionaries, and member missionaries, we rely on religious freedom in order to teach the Lord’s doctrine in our families and throughout the world.

19. The third cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to form a religious organization, a church, to worship peacefully with others. The Lord commands us, “They were taught by King Mormon to raise their voices for what they felt was right.” Therefore they “assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute … one with another.”

20. In these discussions, members of the Church and others had the opportunity to come together, experience the spirit of unity, and be influenced by the Holy Ghost. “And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king.”

21. As we face increased pressure to bow to secular standards, forfeit our religious liberties, and compromise our agency, consider what the Book of Mormon teaches about our responsibilities. In the book of Alma we read of Amlici, “a very cunning” and “wicked man” who sought to be king over the people and “deprive them of their rights and privileges,” which “was alarming to the people of the church.” They were taught by King Mormon to raise their voices for what they felt was right. Therefore they “assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute … one with another.”

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24. As disciples of Jesus Christ we have a responsibility to work together with like-minded believers, to raise our voices for what is right. While members should never claim or even imply that they are speaking for the Church, we are all invited, in our capacity as citizens, to share our personal witness with conviction and love—“every man [and woman] according to his [or her] own mind.”

25. Said the Prophet Joseph Smith: “I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination [as for a Mormon]; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.

26. “It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race.”

27. Brothers and sisters, we are responsible to safeguard these sacred freedoms and rights for ourselves and our posterity. What can you and I do?

28. First, we can become informed. Be aware of issues in your community that could have an impact on religious liberty.

29. Second, in your individual capacity, join with others who share our commitment to religious freedom. Work side by side to protect religious freedom.

30. Third, live your life to be a good example of what you believe—in word and deed. How we live our religion is far more important than what we may say about our religion.

31. Our Savior’s Second Coming is drawing nearer. Let us not delay in this great cause. Remember Captain Moroni, who hoisted the title of liberty inscribed with the words “In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children.” Let us remember the people’s response: exercising their
agency, they “came running together” with a covenant to act.  

32. My beloved brothers and sisters, don’t walk! Run! Run to receive the blessings of agency by following the Holy Ghost and exercising the freedoms God has given us to do His will.

33. I bear my special witness on this special Easter day that Jesus Christ used His agency to do our Father’s will.

34. Of our Savior, we sing, “His precious blood he freely spilt; His life he freely gave.” And because He did, we have the priceless opportunity “to choose liberty and eternal life” through the power and blessings of His Atonement. May we freely choose to follow Him today and always, I pray in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes
1. 2 Timothy 3:3.
2. Isaiah 5:20.
3. See Moses 6:56.
4. Moses 4:3.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
8. 2 Corinthians 4:17.
10. See the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948, un.org/en/documents/udhr. Article 18 states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” See also article 9 of Europe’s Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, ratified on Sept. 3, 1953, conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/005.htm.
12. Mark 16:15.
17. Alma 2:5; emphasis added.
19. Alma 2:5.
24. 2 Nephi 2:27.
The Challenge to Become
Elder Dallin H. Oaks
General Conference, October 2000

1. The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord's teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be convinced of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are converted by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to know something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become something.

2. Many Bible and modern scriptures speak of a final judgment at which all persons will be rewarded according to their deeds or works or the desires of their hearts. But other scriptures enlarge upon this by referring to our being judged by the condition we have achieved.

3. The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we have become: "And if their works have been filthiness they must needs be filthy; and if they be filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God" (1 Ne. 15:33; emphasis added). Moroni declares, "He that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still" (Morm. 9:14; emphasis added; see also Rev. 22:11-12; 2 Ne. 9:16; D&C 88:35). The same would be true of "selfish" or "disobedient" or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God. Referring to the "state" of the wicked in the Final Judgment, Alma explains that if we are condemned by our words, our works, and our thoughts, "we shall not be found spotless; ... and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God" (Alma 12:14).

4. From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts--what we have done. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts--what we have become. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.

5. A parable illustrates this understanding. A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would probably be wasted. The father said to his child:

6. "All that I have I desire to give you--not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I have I can easily give you, but that which I am you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours."

7. This parable parallels the pattern of heaven. The gospel of Jesus Christ promises the incomparable inheritance of eternal life, the fulness of the Father, and reveals the laws and principles by which it can be obtained.

8. We qualify for eternal life through a process of conversion. As used here, this word of many meanings signifies not just a convincing but a profound change of nature. Jesus used this meaning when he taught His chief Apostle the difference between a testimony and a conversion. Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13). Next He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?"

9. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

10. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:13). Next He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?"

11. Peter had a testimony. He knew that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and he declared it. To testify is to know and to declare.

12. Later on, Jesus taught these same men about conversion, which is far more than testimony. When the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the
13. "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

14. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:2-4; emphasis added).

15. Later, the Savior confirmed the importance of being converted, even for those with a testimony of the truth. In the sublime instructions given at the Last Supper, He told Simon Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

16. In order to strengthen his brethren—to nourish and lead the flock of God—this man who had followed Jesus for three years, who had been given the authority of the holy apostleship, who had been a valiant teacher and testifier of the Christian gospel, and whose testimony had caused the Master to declare him blessed still had to be "converted."

17. Jesus' challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to know and to declare. The gospel challenges us to be "converted," which requires us to do and to become. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be "converted." We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted. For example, returned missionaries, are you still seeking to be converted, or are you caught up in the ways of the world?

18. The needed conversion by the gospel begins with the introductory experience the scriptures call being "born again" (e.g., Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; John 3:7; 1 Pet. 1:23). In the waters of baptism and by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we become the spiritual "sons and daughters" of Jesus Christ, "new creatures" who can "inherit the kingdom of God" (Mosiah 27:25-26).

19. In teaching the Nephites, the Savior referred to what they must become. He challenged them to repent and be baptized and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, "that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Ne. 27:20). He concluded: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Ne. 27:27).

20. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan by which we can become what children of God are supposed to become. This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, an accumulation of right choices, and from continuing repentance. "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32).

21. Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. As we do so, we should remember that our family relationships—even more than our Church callings—are the setting in which the most important part of that development can occur. The conversion we must achieve requires us to be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. Being a successful Church leader is not enough. Exaltation is an eternal family experience, and it is our mortal family experiences that are best suited to prepare us for it.

22. The Apostle John spoke of what we are challenged to become when he said: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn. 3:2; see also Moro. 7:48).

23. I hope the importance of conversion and becoming will cause our local leaders to reduce their concentration on statistical measures of actions and to focus more on what our brothers and sisters are and what they are striving to become.

24. Our needed conversions are often achieved more readily by suffering and adversity than by comfort and tranquility, as Elder Hales taught us so beautifully this morning. Father Lehi promised his son Jacob that God would "consecrate [his] afflictions for [his] gain" (2 Ne. 2:2). The Prophet Joseph was promised that "thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high" (D&C 121:7-8).

25. Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call "the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10; 1 Ne. 20:10). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or the loss or postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing. Still others struggle with personal impairments or with feelings of rejection, inadequacy, or depression. Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become.

26. We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by
doing it for the right reason—for the pure love of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (see 1 Cor. 13). The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, “the pure love of Christ” (Moro. 7:47), is not an act but a condition or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes. Thus, as Moroni declared, “except men shall have charity they cannot inherit” the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father (Ether 12:34; emphasis added).

27. All of this helps us understand an important meaning of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which the Savior gave to explain what the kingdom of heaven is like. As you remember, the owner of the vineyard hired laborers at different times of the day. Some he sent into the vineyard early in the morning, others about the third hour, and others in the sixth and ninth hours. Finally, in the eleventh hour he sent others into the vineyard, promising that he would also pay them “whatsoever is right” (Matt. 20:7).

28. At the end of the day the owner of the vineyard gave the same wage to every worker, even to those who had come in the eleventh hour. When those who had worked the entire day saw this, "they murmured against the good man of the house" (Matt. 20:11). The owner did not yield but merely pointed out that he had done no one any wrong, since he had paid each man the agreed amount.

29. Like other parables, this one can teach several different and valuable principles. For present purposes its lesson is that the Master’s reward in the Final Judgment will not be based on how long we have labored in the vineyard. We do not obtain our heavenly reward by punching a time clock. What is essential is that our labors in the workplace of the Lord have caused us to become something. For some of us, this requires a longer time than for others. What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors. Many who come in the eleventh hour have been refined and prepared by the Lord in ways other than formal employment in the vineyard. These workers are like the prepared dry mix to which it is only necessary to “add water”—the perfecting ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. With that addition—even in the eleventh hour—these workers are in the same state of development and qualified to receive the same reward as those who have labored long in the vineyard.

30. This parable teaches us that we should never give up hope and loving associations with family members and friends whose fine qualities (see Moro. 7:5-14) evidence their progress toward what a loving Father would have them become. Similarly, the power of the Atonement and the principle of repentance show that we should never give up on loved ones who now seem to be making many wrong choices.

31. Instead of being judgmental about others, we should be concerned about ourselves. We must not give up hope. We must not stop striving. We are children of God, and it is possible for us to become what our Heavenly Father would have us become.

32. How can we measure our progress? The scriptures suggest various ways. I will mention only two.

33. After King Benjamin’s great sermon, many of his hearers cried out that the Spirit of the Lord “has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). If we are losing our desire to do evil, we are progressing toward our heavenly goal.

34. The Apostle Paul said that persons who have received the Spirit of God “have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). I understand this to mean that persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world.

35. I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, whose Church this is. I testify with gratitude of the plan of the Father under which, through the Resurrection and Atonement of our Savior, we have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity to become what is necessary for eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
1. What a privilege and joy to be a part of this marvelous assembly of girls and women. How blessed we are as women to be joined together this evening in unity and in love.

2. I recently read the story of Marie Madeline Cardon, who, with her family, received the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from the first missionaries called to serve in Italy in 1850. She was a young woman of 17 or 18 years of age when they were baptized. One Sunday, while the family was holding a worship service in their home high in the Alps of northern Italy, an angry mob of men, including some of the local ministers, gathered around the house and began shouting, yelling, and calling for the missionaries to be brought outside. I don’t think they were anxious to be taught the gospel—they intended bodily harm. It was young Marie who marched out of the house to confront the mob.

3. They continued their vicious yells and demands for the missionaries to be brought out. Marie raised her Bible up in her hand and commanded them to depart. She told them that the elders were under her protection and that they could not harm one hair of their heads. Listen to her own words: “All stood aghast. … God was with me. He placed those words in my mouth, or I could not have spoken them. All was calm, instantly. That strong ferocious body of men stood helpless before a weak, trembling, yet fearless girl.” The ministers asked the mob to leave, which they did quietly in shame, fear, and remorse. The small flock completed their meeting in peace.

4. Can’t you just picture that brave young woman, the same age as many of you, standing up to a mob and defending her newly found beliefs with courage and conviction?

5. Sisters, few of us will ever have to face an angry mob, but there is a war going on in this world in which our most cherished and basic doctrines are under attack. I am speaking specifically of the doctrine of the family. The sanctity of the home and the essential purposes of the family are being questioned, criticized, and assaulted on every front.

6. When President Gordon B. Hinckley first read “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” 20 years ago this year, we were grateful for and valued the clarity, simplicity, and truth of this revelatory document. Little did we realize then how very desperately we would need these basic declarations in today’s world as the criteria by which we could judge each new wind of worldly dogma coming at us from the media, the Internet, scholars, TV and films, and even legislators. The proclamation on the family has become our benchmark for judging the philosophies of the world, and I testify that the principles set forth within this statement are as true today as they were when they were given to us by a prophet of God nearly 20 years ago.

7. May I point out something obvious? Life rarely goes exactly according to plan for anyone, and we are very aware that not all women are experiencing what the proclamation describes. It is still important to understand and teach the Lord’s pattern and strive for the realization of that pattern the best we can.

8. Each of us has a part to play in the plan, and each of us is equally valued in the eyes of the Lord. We should remember that a loving Heavenly Father is aware of our righteous desires and will honor His promises that nothing will be withheld from those who faithfully keep their covenants. Heavenly Father has a mission and plan for each of us, but He also has His own timetable. One
of the hardest challenges in this life is to have faith in the Lord's timing. It's a good idea to have an alternative plan in mind, which helps us to be covenant-keeping, charitable, and righteous women who build the kingdom of God no matter which way our lives go. We need to teach our daughters to aim for the ideal but plan for contingencies.

9. During this 20th anniversary year of the family proclamation, I would like to issue a challenge for all of us as women of the Church to be defenders of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” Just as Marie Madeline Cardon courageously defended the missionaries and her newly found beliefs, we need to boldly defend the Lord's revealed doctrines describing marriage, families, the divine roles of men and women, and the importance of homes as sacred places—even when the world is shouting in our ears that these principles are outdated, limiting, or no longer relevant. Everyone, no matter what their marital circumstance or number of children, can be defenders of the Lord's plan described in the family proclamation. If it is the Lord's plan, it should also be our plan!

10. There are three principles taught in the proclamation which I think are especially in need of steadfast defenders. The first is marriage between a man and a woman. We are taught in the scriptures, “Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” For anyone to attain the fulness of priesthood blessings, there must be a husband and a wife sealed in the house of the Lord, working together in righteousness and remaining faithful to their covenants. This is the Lord's plan for His children, and no amount of public discourse or criticism will change what the Lord has declared. We need to continue to model righteous marriages, seek for that blessing in our lives, and have faith if it is slow in coming. Let us be defenders of marriage as the Lord has ordained it while continuing to show love and compassion for those with differing views.

11. The next principle which calls for our defending voices is elevating the divine roles of mothers and fathers. We eagerly teach our children to aim high in this life. We want to make sure that our daughters know that they have the potential to achieve and be whatever they can imagine. We hope they will love learning, be educated, talented, and maybe even become the next Marie Curie or Eliza R. Snow.

12. Do we also teach our sons and daughters there is no greater honor, no more elevated title, and no more important role in this life than that of mother or father? I would hope that as we encourage our children to reach for the very best in this life that we also teach them to honor and exalt the roles that mothers and fathers play in Heavenly Father's plan.

13. Our youngest daughter, Abby, saw a unique opportunity to stand as a defender of the role of mother. One day she got a notice from her children's school that they were having Career Day presentations at the school. Parents were invited to send in an application if they wanted to come to school to teach the children about their jobs, and Abby felt impressed to apply to come and speak about motherhood. She didn't hear back from the school, and when Career Day was getting close, she finally called the school, thinking they may have lost her application. The organizers scrambled around and found two teachers who agreed to have Abby come talk to their classes at the end of Career Day.

14. In her very fun presentation to the children, Abby taught them, among other things, that as a mother she needed to be somewhat of an expert in medicine, psychology, religion, teaching, music, literature, art, finance, decorating, hair styling, chauffeuring, sports, culinary arts, and so much more. The children were impressed. She finished by having the children remember their mothers by writing thank-you notes expressing gratitude for the many loving acts of service they received daily. Abby felt that the children saw their mothers in a whole new light and that being a mother or father was something of great worth. She applied to share again this year at Career Day and was invited to present to six classes.

15. Abby has said of her experience: “I feel like it could be easy in this world for a child to get the sense that being a parent is a secondary job or even sometimes a necessary inconvenience. I want every child to feel like they are the most important priority to their parent, and maybe telling them how important being a parent is to me will help them realize all that their parents do for them and why.”

16. Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is a wonderful example of honoring women and motherhood, especially his own mother. In reference to our
earthly mothers, he has said: "May each of us treasure this truth; one cannot forget mother and remember God. One cannot remember mother and forget God. Why? Because these two sacred persons, God and [our earthly] mother, partners in creation, in love, in sacrifice, in service, are as one."  

17. The last principle we need to stand and defend is the sanctity of the home. We need to take a term which is sometimes spoken of with derision and elevate it. It is the term homemaker. All of us—women, men, youth, and children, single or married—can work at being homemakers. We should “make our homes” places of order, refuge, holiness, and safety. Our homes should be places where the Spirit of the Lord is felt in rich abundance and where the scriptures and the gospel are studied, taught, and lived. What a difference it would make in the world if all people would see themselves as makers of righteous homes. Let us defend the home as a place which is second only to the temple in holiness.

18. Sisters, I am grateful to be a woman in these latter days. We have opportunities and possibilities which no other generation of women has had in the world. Let us help build the kingdom of God by standing up boldly and being defenders of marriage, parenthood, and the home. The Lord needs us to be brave, steadfast, and immovable warriors who will defend His plan and teach the upcoming generations His truths.

19. I bear witness that Heavenly Father lives and loves each of us. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes
1. See Marie Madeline Cardon Guild, "Marie Madeline Cardon Guild: An Autobiography," cardonfamilies.org/Histories/MarieMadelineCardonGuild.html; see also Marie C. Guild autobiography, circa 1909, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
2. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
1. Welcome to this devotional broadcast, wherever you are in this big, wide, wonderful Church. Thank you all for caring enough to be in attendance, including those of you who are here on the Dixie State College campus in my hometown.

There Have Been Many Calls to Leave Babylon

2. To invite the Spirit of the Lord to be with us, I requested the hymn we began this meeting with: “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling.” It is one of the great classics of the Restoration and provides the framework for much of what I want to say to you tonight. We could have added “Ye Elders of Israel” for the same purpose. I love hearing the missionaries around the world cry out, “O Babylon, O Babylon, we bid thee farewell; we’re going to the mountains of Ephraim to dwell.” 1 The message of those two hymns is essentially the same—that God is always calling to the children of Israel to a place where, ultimately, all will be well.

Israel, Israel, God is calling,
Calling thee from lands of woe.
Babylon the great is falling;
God shall all her tow’rs o’erthrow. …
Come to Zion, come to Zion,
And within her walls rejoice. …
Come to Zion, come to Zion!
Zion’s walls shall ring with praise. ²

3. In effect, this has been Israel’s history down through the ages. When things got too sinful, or there was too much secularization in society, or life with the Gentiles was destroying the moral code and commandments God had given, the children of the covenant would be sent fleeing into the wilderness to reestablish Zion and start all over again.

4. In Old Testament times Abraham, the father of this kind of covenant, had to flee for his life from Chaldea—literally Babylonia—in his quest for a consecrated life in Canaan (what we would now call the Holy Land). ³ It wasn’t many generations before the descendants of Abraham (and then Isaac and Jacob)—by then full-fledged Israelites—lost their Zion and were in bondage in far-off, pagan Egypt. ⁴ So Moses had to be raised up to lead the children of promise into the wilderness again—this time in the middle of the night, without even time for their bread dough to rise! “Israel, Israel, God is speaking,” they undoubtedly sang in their own way. “Hear your great Deliv’rer’s voice!” ⁵

5. Not many centuries later, a story of special interest to us unfolded when one of those Israelite families, headed by a prophet named Lehi, was commanded to flee even beloved Jerusalem because, alas, Babylon was again at the door. ⁶ Here we go again! Little did they know that they were going to an entirely new continent to establish a whole new concept of Zion, ⁷ but so it would be. And little did they know that it had already happened just like this once before with a group of their forefathers called the Jaredites. ⁸

6. As noted, this is a worldwide broadcast to an increasingly international Church, but it is of interest to all who celebrate the Restoration of the gospel that the colonization of America was born of a group fleeing from their former homelands in order to worship as they wished. A distinguished scholar of the Puritan settlement in America described this experience as Christianity’s “errand into the wilderness,” the effort of modern Israelites to free themselves of Old World godlessness and once again seek the ways of heaven in a new land. ⁹

7. For tonight’s purpose I remind you of one last flight, the flight for which our hymn tonight was actually written. It was our own Church, led by our own prophets, leading our own religious ancestors. With Joseph Smith being hounded through the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Missouri, and finally being murdered in Illinois, we were to see the latter-day reenactment of Israel’s children again seeking for a place of seclusion. Brigham Young, the American Moses, as he has been admiringly called, led the Saints to the valleys of the mountains as those foot-weary Saints sang:

We’ll find the place which God for us prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid; 
There the Saints will be blessed. 10

is it? Well, we are not sure, but we will find it. For more 
than 4,000 years of covenantal history, this has been the 
Build Zion's protective walls.

9. Until now. Until tonight. Until this our day. 

Our Call Is to Build Zion Where We Are 

10. One of the many unique characteristics of our 
dispensation, this the dispensation of the fulness of 
times—the last and greatest of all dispensations—is the 
changing nature of how we establish the kingdom of 
God on earth. You see, one of the truly exciting things 
about this dispensation is that it is a time of mighty, 
accelerated change. And one thing that has changed 
is that the Church of God will never again flee. It will 
never again leave Ur in order to leave Haran, in order 
to leave Canaan, in order to leave Jerusalem, in order 
to leave England, in order to leave Kirtland, in order 
to leave Nauvoo, in order to go who knows where. No, as 
Brigham Young said for us all, "We have been kicked 
out of the frying-pan into the fire, out of the fire into 
the middle of the floor, and here we are and here we will 
stay." 11

11. Of course, that statement wasn't a comment about 
the Salt Lake Valley only or even the Wasatch Front 
generally; it became a statement for the members of the 
Church all over the world. In these last days, in this our 
dispensation, we would become mature enough to stop 
routing. We would become mature enough to plant 
our feet and our families and our foundations in every 
nation, kindred, tongue, and people permanently. Zion 
would be everywhere—wherever the Church is. And 
with that change—one of the mighty changes of the last 
days—we no longer think of Zion as where we are going 
to live; we think of it as how we are going to live.

Three Incidents That Lead to Three Lessons 

12. To frame this new task just a little, I wish to draw 
tonight upon three incidents Sister Holland and I 
have experienced within the fairly recent past. If time 
permitted I could cite dozens more, and so could you.

13. Number one: A few years ago a young friend of mine—a 
returned missionary—was on one of the college 
basketball teams in Utah. He was a great young man and 
a very good ballplayer, but he wasn't playing as much 
as he hoped he would. His particular talents and skills 
weren't exactly what that team needed at that stage of 
its development or his. That happens in athletics. So, 

with the full support and best wishes of his coaches and 
his teammates, my young friend transferred to another 
school where he hoped he might contribute a little more.

14. As fate would have it, things clicked at the new school, 
and my friend soon became a starter. And wouldn’t you 
know it—the schedule (determined years before these 
events transpired) had this young man returning to play 
against his former team in Salt Lake City's then-named 
Delta Center.

15. What happened in that game has bothered me to this 
day, and I am seizing this unusual moment to get it 
off my chest. The vitriolic abuse that poured out of 
the stands on this young man's head that night—a 
Latter-day Saint, returned missionary, newlywed who 
paid his tithing, served in the elder's quorum, gave 
charitable service to the youth in his community, and 
waited excitedly for a new baby coming to him and his 
wife—what was said and done and showered upon him 
that night, and on his wife and their families, should not 
have been experienced by any human being anywhere 
anytime, whatever his sport, whatever his university, or 
whatever his personal decisions had been about either 
of them.

16. But here is the worst part. The coach of this visiting 
team, something of a legend in the profession, turned to 
him after a spectacular game and said: “What is going 
on here? You are the hometown boy who has made 
good. These are your people. These are your friends.” 
But worst of all, he then said in total bewilderment, 
“ Aren’t most of these people members of your church?”

17. Incident number two: I was invited to speak in a stake 
single-adult devotional—one of those open-ended 
“18-and-over” sort of things. As I entered the rear 
door of the stake center, a 30-something young woman 
entered the building at about the same time. Even in the 
crush of people moving toward the chapel, it was hard 
not to notice her. As I recall, she had a couple of tattoos, 
a variety of ear and nose rings, spiky hair reflecting all 
the colors now available in snow cones, a skirt that was 
too high, and a blouse that was too low.

18. Three questions leapt to my mind: Was this woman a 
struggling soul, not of our faith, who had been led—or 
even better, had been brought by someone—to this 
devotional under the guidance of the Lord in an effort 
to help her find the peace and the direction of the gospel 
that she needed in her life? Another possibility: Was she 
a member who had strayed a bit maybe from some of 
the hopes and standards that the Church encourages for 
its members but who, thank heaven, was still affiliating 
and had chosen to attend this Church activity that 
night? Or a third option: Is this the stake Relief Society 
president? (Somehow I was sure she was not.)
Lesson 1: Never “Check Your Religion at the Door”

24. First, let's finish the basketball incident. The day after that game, when there was some public reckoning and a call to repentance over the incident, one young man said, in effect: "Listen. We are talking about basketball here, not Sunday School. If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. We pay good money to see these games. We can act the way we want. We check our religion at the door.”

25. “We check our religion at the door”? Lesson number one for the establishment of Zion in the 21st century: You never “check your religion at the door.” Not ever.

26. My young friends, that kind of discipleship cannot be—it is not discipleship at all. As the prophet Alma has taught the young women of the Church to declare every week in their Young Women theme, we are "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in,” 13 not just some of the time, in a few places, or when our team has a big lead.

27. “Check your religion at the door”! I was furious.

Lesson 2: Show Compassion, but Be Loyal to the Commandments

28. But let's stay with this for a minute because there is a second lesson on its way. Lesson number two in tonight's quest for Zion is that in my righteous indignation (at least we always say it is righteous) I have to make sure that I don't end up doing exactly what I was accusing this young fan of doing—getting mad, acting stupid, losing my cool, ranting about it, wanting to get my hands on him—preferably around his throat—until, before I know it, I have checked my religion at the door! No, someone in life, someone in the 21st century, someone in all of these situations has to live his or her religion because otherwise all we get is a whole bunch of idiots acting like moral pygmies.

29. It is easy to be righteous when things are calm and life is good and everything is going smoothly. The test is when there is real trial or temptation, when there is pressure and fatigue, anger and fear, or the possibility of real transgression. Can we be faithful then? That is the question because “Israel, Israel, God is calling.” Such integrity is, of course, the majesty of “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” 14 —right when forgiving and understanding and being generous about your crucifiers is the last thing that anyone less perfect than the Savior of the world would want to do. But we have to try; we have to wish to be strong. Whatever the situation or the provocation or the problem, no true disciple of Christ can “check his religion at the door.”
30. That leads me to the woman with the rainbow hair and the many splendored rings. However one would respond to that young woman, the rule forever is that it has to reflect our religious beliefs and our gospel commitments. Therefore, how we respond in any situation has to make things better, not worse. We can’t act or react in such a way that we are guilty of a greater offense than, in this case, she is. That doesn’t mean that we don’t have opinions, that we don’t have standards, that we somehow completely disregard divinely mandated “thou shalt” and “thou shalt nots” in life. But it does mean we have to live those standards and defend those “thou shalt”s and “thou shalt nots” in a righteous way to the best of our ability, the way the Savior lived and defended them. And He always did what should have been done to make the situation better—from teaching the truth, to forgiving sinners, to cleansing the temple. It is no small gift to know how to do such things in the right way!

31. So, with our new acquaintance of the unusual dress and grooming code, we start, above all, by remembering she is a daughter of God and of eternal worth. We start by remembering that she is someone’s daughter here on earth as well and could, under other circumstances, be my daughter. We start by being grateful that she is at a Church activity, not avoiding one. In short, we try to be at our best in this situation in a desire to help her be at her best. We keep praying silently: What is the right thing to do here? And what is the right thing to say? What ultimately will make this situation and her better? Asking these questions and really trying to do what the Savior would do is what I think He meant when He said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

32. Having said that, I remind us all that while reaching out to and helping back a lamb who has strayed, we also have a profound responsibility to the 99 who didn’t—and to the wishes and will of the Shepherd. There is a sheepfold, and we are all supposed to be in it, to say nothing of the safety and blessings that come to us for being there. My young brothers and sisters, this Church can never “dumb down” its doctrine in response to social goodwill or political expediency or any other reason. It is only the high ground of revealed truth that gives us any footing on which to lift another who may feel troubled or forsaken. Our compassion and our love—fundamental characteristics and requirements of our Christianity—must never be interpreted as compromising the commandments. As the marvelous George MacDonald once said, in such situations “we are not bound to say all that we [believe], but we are bound not even to look [like] what we do not [believe]."

33. In this regard—this call for compassion and loyalty to the commandments—there is sometimes a chance for a misunderstanding, especially among young people who may think we are not supposed to judge anything, that we are never to make a value assessment of any kind. We have to help each other with that because the Savior makes it clear that in some situations we have to judge, we are under obligation to judge—as when He said, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.” That sounds like a judgment to me. The alternative is to surrender to the moral relativism of a deconstructionist, postmodern world which, pushed far enough, posits that ultimately nothing is eternally true or especially sacred and, therefore, no one position on any given issue matters more than any other. And that simply is not true.

34. In this process of evaluation, we are not called on to condemn others, but we are called upon to make decisions every day that reflect judgment—we hope good judgment. Elder Dallin H. Oaks once referred to these kinds of decisions as “intermediate judgments,” which we often have to make for our own safety or for the safety of others, as opposed to what he called “final judgments,” which can only be made by God, who knows all the facts. (Remember, in the scripture quoted earlier, that the Savior said these are to be “righteous judgments,” not self-righteous judgments, which is a very different thing.)

35. For example, parents have to exercise good judgment regarding the safety and welfare of their children every day. No one would fault a parent who says children must eat their vegetables or who restricts a child from running into a street roaring with traffic. So why should a parent be faulted who cares, at a little later age, what time those children come home at night, or what the moral and behavioral standards of their friends are, or at what age they date, or whether or not they experiment with drugs or pornography or engage in sexual transgression? No, we are making decisions and taking stands and reaffirming our values—in short, making “intermediate judgments”—all the time, or at least we should be.

Some Issues and Laws Have Eternal Consequences

36. When we face such situations in complex social issues in a democratic society, it can be very challenging and, to some, confusing. Young people may ask about this position taken or that policy made by the Church, saying: “Well, we don’t believe we should live or behave in such and such a way, but why do we have to make other people do the same? Don’t they have their free agency? Aren’t we being self-righteous and judgmental,
forcing our beliefs on others, demanding that they act in a certain way?" In those situations you are going to have to explain sensitively why some principles are defended and some sins opposed wherever they are found because the issues and the laws involved are not just social or political but eternal in their consequence. And while not wishing to offend those who believe differently from us, we are even more anxious not to offend God, or as the scripture says, "not offend him who is your lawgiver" 19 —and I am speaking here of serious moral laws.

37. But to make the point, let me use the example of a lesser law. It is a little like a teenager saying, "Now that I can drive, I know I am supposed to stop at a red light, but do we really have to be judgmental and try to get everyone else to stop at red lights? Does everyone have to do what we do? Don't others have their agency? Must they behave as we do?" You then have to explain why, yes, we do hope all will stop at a red light. And you have to do this without demeaning those who transgress or who believe differently than we believe because, yes, they do have their moral agency.

38. My young friends, there is a wide variety of beliefs in this world, and there is moral agency for all, but no one is entitled to act as if God is mute on these subjects or as if commandments only matter if there is public agreement over them. In the 21st century we cannot flee any longer. We are going to have to fight for laws and circumstances and environments that allow the free exercise of religion and our franchise in it. That is one way we can tolerate being in Babylon but not of it.

39. I know of no more important ability and no greater integrity for us to demonstrate in a world from which we cannot flee than to walk that careful path—taking a moral stand according to what God has declared and the laws He has given, but doing it compassionately and with understanding and great charity. Talk about a hard thing to do—to distinguish perfectly between the sin and the sinner. I know of few distinctions that are harder to make, or at least harder to articulate, but we must lovingly try to do exactly that. Believe me, brothers and sisters, in the world into which we are moving, we are going to have a lot of opportunity to develop such strength, display such courage, and demonstrate such compassion—all at the same time. And I am not speaking now of punk hairdos or rings in your nose.

Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve devoted an entire general conference talk to this subject two years ago. In speaking of the need for us to influence society beyond the walls of our own home he said:

41. "In addition to protecting our own families, we should be a source of light in protecting our communities. The Savior said, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' …

42. "In our increasingly unrighteous world, it is essential that values based on religious belief be [evident in] the public square. …

43. "Religious faith is a store of light, knowledge, and wisdom and benefits society in a dramatic way." 20

44. If we don't take gospel blessings to our communities and our countries, the simple fact of the matter is we will never have enough policemen—there will never be enough Isaac Freestones—to enforce moral behavior even if it were enforceable. And it isn't. Those children in that home without food or clothing are sons and daughters of God. That mother, more culpable because she is older and should be more responsible, is also a daughter of God. Such situations may require tough love in formal, even legal ways, but we must try to help when and where we can because we are not checking our religion at the door, even as pathetic and irresponsible as some doors are.

45. We aren't going to solve every personal or social problem in the world here tonight. When we leave this evening, there will still be poverty, ignorance and transgression, unemployment and abuse, violence and heartache in our neighborhoods and cities and nations. No, we can't do everything, but as the old saying goes, we can do something. And in answer to God's call, the children of Israel are the ones to do it—not to flee Babylon this time but to attack it. Without being naive or Pollyannaish about it, we can live our religion so broadly and unfailingly that we find all kinds of opportunities to help families, bless neighbors, and protect others, including the rising generation.

Live Your Life to Reflect Your Love of Jesus Christ

46. I have not uttered the word missionary in this context for fear you would immediately think of white shirts and name tags. Don't limit me on this. Stay with the big picture—the huge need—to share the gospel always, whether you are a full-time missionary or not. Latter-day Saints are called upon to be the leaven in the loaf, the salt that never loses its savor, the light set upon a hill never to be hidden under a bushel. And your age

Lesson 3: Use Gospel Values to Benefit Communities and Countries

40. Now lastly, the difficult story from Kansas City. Not many of us are going to be police officers or social service agents or judges sitting on a legal bench, but all of us should care for the welfare of others and the moral safety of our extended community. Elder Quentin L.

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group—18 to 30 for the most part—is the time in a person's life when your acquaintances are most likely to accept the gospel if it is presented to them. We know that. A number of studies conducted by the Church have told us that.

47. So start presenting! If we do right and talk right and reach out generously with our words and our deeds, then when the Savior cuts short His work in righteousness, says time is no more in this last, great dispensation and then comes in His glory, He will find us—you and me and all of us—doing our best, trying to live the gospel, trying to improve our lives and our Church and our society the best way we can. When He comes, I so want to be caught living the gospel. I want to be surprised right in the act of spreading the faith and doing something good. I want the Savior to say to me: "Jeffrey"—because He knows all of our names—"I recognize you not by your title but by your life, the way you are trying to live and the standards you are trying to defend. I see the integrity of your heart. I know you have tried to make things better first and foremost by being better yourself, and then by declaring my word and defending my gospel to others in the most compassionate way you could."

48. "I know you weren't always successful," He will certainly say, "with your own sins or the circumstances of others, but I believe you honestly tried. I believe in your heart you truly loved me."

49. I want to have something like that encounter someday as I want nothing else in this mortal life. And I want it for you. I want it for us all. Israel, Israel, God is calling—calling us to live the gospel of Jesus Christ personally in small ways as well as large, and then to reach out to those who may not look or dress or behave quite like we do, and then (where you can) go beyond that to serve in the widest community you can address.

50. To help you do that, I leave along with my testimony, an apostolic blessing on each of you this night. I bless you, by the power of the priesthood and the commission that I have received, to know that God loves you, that He needs you in this last and greatest dispensation when everything is accelerated and more and more is expected. I bless you, with apostolic authority, that your prayers offered in righteousness will be answered, that your personal fears will be lifted, that your backs and your shoulders and your hearts will be strong for the burdens that are placed upon them. I bless you as you strive to be pure in heart, offering yourselves as instruments in the hands of God for establishing Zion in these latter days everywhere you stand. I bless you to be true friends to each other and to those not of your circle to whom we should reach out. Above that, I bless you to be friends of the Savior of the world, to know Him personally, and to have confidence in His company.

51. I love the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servant I am trying to be. And I love our Heavenly Father, who cared enough to give Him to us. I know that, regarding that gift, God is calling to Israel in these latter days and that He expects us to respond to that call and to be more Christlike, to be more holy than we now are in our determination to live the gospel and establish Zion. I also know that He will give us both the strength and the holiness to be true disciples if we plead for it. I testify of the divinity of this work, of the love and grandeur of Almighty God, and the infinite Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ even down unto the least of each one of us. I bless you with this hope for happiness and holiness, tonight and tomorrow and forever, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes
2. "Israel, Israel, God is Calling," Hymns, no. 7.
3. See Abraham 2:3.
5. "Israel, Israel, God is Calling," Hymns, no. 7.
7. See 1 Nephi 18:22–24.
12. Isaac Freestone, experience shared with the author on May 5, 2012.
1. My dear young brothers and sisters, Kristen and I feel privileged to be with you on this significant occasion. We meet on 9/11, the 10th anniversary of an event that has profoundly influenced our lives and thinking and will do so for many years to come. It is forever associated with the Twin Towers.

2. I have felt impressed to speak this evening about another set of twins, the twin ideas of Truth and Tolerance. These subjects were not chosen because they are uniquely your concern as young adults, like the dating, hanging out, and marriage I described to this audience some years ago. My treatment of truth and tolerance will invite you to consider and to teach these twin subjects because they are vital to the rising generation, in which you are the senior members.

We Believe in Absolute Truth

3. First: Truth. We believe in absolute truth, including the existence of God and the right and wrong established by His commandments. We sing:

Tho the heavens depart and the earth's fountains burst,
Truth, the sum of existence, will weather the worst,
Eternal, unchanged, evermore.1

4. In the words of President Joseph F. Smith: "We believe in all truth, no matter to what subject it may refer. No sect or religious denomination in the world possesses a single principle of truth that we do not accept or that we will reject. We are willing to receive all truth, from whatever source it may come; for truth will stand, truth will endure."2

5. The existence and nature of truth is one of the fundamental questions of mortal life. Jesus told the Roman governor Pilate that He came into the world to "bear witness unto the truth." "What is truth?" that unbeliever responded (see John 18:37–38). In earlier times the Savior had declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). In modern revelation He declared: "Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24).

6. My young brothers and sisters, we know that the existence of God and the existence of absolute truth are fundamental to life on this earth, whether they are believed or not. We also know that evil exists and that some things are simply, seriously, and everlastingly wrong. You whom I address shun evil and seek truth. I salute you for your righteous actions and your righteous desires. As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I seek to help you make right choices in a world that is increasingly polarized between belief and disbelief, between good and evil.

Beware of Moral Relativism

7. Shocking reports of large-scale thievery and lying in civilized societies in the last two months suggest a moral vacuum in which many have little sense of right and wrong. Last month's widespread rioting and pillaging in Britain and the scandalous, widespread cheating by teachers on state-mandated tests in elementary and middle schools in Atlanta, Georgia, have caused many to wonder whether we are losing the moral foundation Western countries have received from their Judeo-Christian heritage.3

8. It is well to worry about our moral foundation. We live in a world where more and more persons of influence are teaching and acting out a belief that there is no absolute right and wrong, that all authority and all rules of behavior are man-made choices that can prevail over the commandments of God. Many even question whether there is a God.

9. The philosophy of moral relativism, which holds that each person is free to choose for himself what is right and wrong, is becoming the unofficial creed for many in America and other Western nations. At the extreme level, evil acts that used to be localized and covered up like a boil are now legalized and paraded like a banner. Persuaded by this philosophy, many of the rising generation—youth and young adults—are caught up in self-serving pleasures, pagan painting and piercing of body parts, foul language, revealing attire, pornography, dishonesty, and degrading sexual indulgence.

10. On the foundation belief in right and wrong, there is an
alarming contrast between the older and the younger generations. According to survey data of two decades ago, “79 percent of American adults [believed] that ‘there are clear guidelines about what's good and evil that apply to everyone regardless of the situation.’” In contrast, a more recent poll of college seniors suggests that “three-quarters of [them] believe that the difference between right and wrong is relative.”

11. Many religious leaders teach the existence of God as the Ultimate Lawgiver, by whose action certain behavior is absolutely right and true and certain other behavior is absolutely wrong and untrue. Bible and Book of Mormon prophets foresaw this time, when men would be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4) and, indeed, when men would deny God (see Jude 1:4; 2 Nephi 28:5; Moroni 7:17; D&C 29:22).

12. In this troubled circumstance, we who believe in God and the corollary truth of absolute right and wrong have the challenge of living in a godless and increasingly amoral world. In this circumstance, all of us—and especially you of the rising generation—have a duty to stand up and speak up to affirm that God exists and that there are absolute truths His commandments establish. In doing so, we Latter-day Saints rely on the truth we sing in the hymn I quoted earlier:

The pillar of truth will endure to the last,  
And its firm-rooted bulwarks outstand the rude blast  
And the wreck of the fell tyrant’s hopes.

13. As I face this audience of committed young people, I know that some of you may be wondering why I am speaking about what is obvious to you and what, you might assume, is obvious to others. Recall the survey data I mentioned earlier, suggesting that about three-quarters of all college seniors believe the difference between right and wrong is relative.

14. I have chosen to speak about truth because teachers in schools, colleges, and universities are teaching and practicing relative morality. This is shaping the attitudes of many young Americans who are taking their places as the teachers of our children and the shapers of public attitudes through the media and popular entertainment. This philosophy of moral relativism denies what millions of believing Christians, Jews, and Muslims consider fundamental, and this denial creates serious problems for all of us. What believers should do about this introduces the second of my twin subjects: Tolerance.

Tolerance

15. Tolerance is defined as a friendly and fair attitude toward unfamiliar opinions and practices or toward the persons who hold or practice them. As modern transportation and communication have brought all of us into closer proximity to different peoples and different ideas, we have greater need for tolerance. When I was a young adult, about 60 years ago, it was only in books and magazines that most Americans were exposed to great differences in cultures, values, and peoples. Now we experience such differences in television and the Internet, through travel, and often in personal interactions in our neighborhoods and the marketplace.

16. This greater exposure to diversity both enriches our lives and complicates them. We are enriched by associations with different peoples, which remind us of the wonderful diversity of the children of God. But diversities in cultures and values also challenge us to identify what can be embraced as consistent with our gospel culture and values and what cannot. In this way diversity increases the potential for conflict and requires us to be more thoughtful about the nature of tolerance. What is tolerance, when does it apply, and when does it not apply?

17. This is a harder question for those who affirm the existence of God and absolute truth than for those who believe in moral relativism. The weaker one's belief in God and the fewer one's moral absolutes, the fewer the occasions when the ideas or practices of others will confront one with the challenge to be tolerant. For example, an atheist has no need to decide what kinds and occasions of profanity or blasphemy can be tolerated and what kinds should be confronted. Persons who don't believe in God or in absolute truth in moral matters can see themselves as the most tolerant of persons. For them, almost anything goes. "You do your thing, and I'll do my thing" is the popular description. This belief system can tolerate almost any behavior and almost any persons. Unfortunately, some who believe in moral relativism seem to have difficulty tolerating those who insist that there is a God who should be respected and certain moral absolutes that should be observed.

Three Absolute Truths for Tolerance

18. I will say no more about the tolerance or intolerance of nonbelievers. I am speaking to an audience of Latter-day Saints who believe in God and in absolute truth. What does tolerance mean to us and to other believers, and what are our special challenges in applying it?

19. I begin with three absolute truths. I express them as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I believe that most of these ideas are shared by believers generally.

20. First, all persons are brothers and sisters under God, taught within their various religions to love and do
good to one another. President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed this idea for Latter-day Saints: “Each of us [from various religious denominations] believes in the fatherhood of God, although we may differ in our interpretations of Him. Each of us is part of a great family, the human family, sons and daughters of God, and therefore brothers and sisters. We must work harder to build mutual respect, an attitude of forbearance, with tolerance one for another regardless of the doctrines and philosophies which we may espouse.”

21. Note that President Hinckley spoke of “mutual respect” as well as tolerance. Speaking at BYU a decade later, a Muslim scholar, Dr. Ali Shihab, an Indonesian, elaborated that idea in these words: “To tolerate something is to learn to live with it, even when you think it is wrong and downright evil. … We must go, I believe, beyond tolerance if we are to achieve harmony in our world.”

22. Relying on the teachings of the Quran, Dr. Shihab continued: “We must respect this God-given dignity in every human being, even in our enemies. For the goal of all human relations—whether they are religious, social, political, or economic—ought to be cooperation and mutual respect.”

23. Living together with mutual respect for one another’s differences is a challenge in today’s world. However—and here I express a second absolute truth—this living with differences is what the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us we must do.

24. The kingdom of God is like a leaven, Jesus taught (see Matthew 13:33). A leaven—yeast—is hidden away in the larger mass until the whole is leavened, which means raised by its influence. Our Savior also taught that His followers will have tribulation in the world, that their numbers and dominions will be small (see 1 Nephi 14:12), and that they will be hated because they are not of the world (see John 17:14). That is our role. We are called to live with other children of God who do not share our faith or our values and who do not have the covenant obligations we have assumed. So it was that, at the conclusion of His ministry, Jesus prayed to the Father, “Not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). We are to be in the world, but not of the world.

25. Since followers of Jesus Christ are commanded to be a leaven—not to be taken out of the world, but to remain in it—we must seek tolerance from those who hate us for not being of the world. As part of this, we will sometimes need to challenge laws that would impair our freedom to practice our faiths, doing so in reliance on our constitutional rights to the free exercise of religion. As described by an attorney supporting a Lutheran school in a case now before the United States Supreme Court, the big concern is “the ability of people of all faiths to work out their relationship with God and one another without the government looking over their shoulder.” That is why we need understanding and support—including your understanding and support—when we must contend for religious freedom.

26. We must also practice tolerance and respect toward others. As the Apostle Paul taught, Christians should “follow after the things which make for peace” (Romans 14:19) and, as much as possible, “live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). Consequently, we should be alert to honor the good we should see in all people and in many opinions and practices that differ from our own. As the Book of Mormon teaches:

27. “All things which are good cometh of God. …

28. “… Wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

29. “Wherefore, take heed … that ye do not judge … that which is good and of God to be of the devil” (Moroni 7:12–14).

30. That approach to differences will yield tolerance and also respect.

31. Our tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs does not cause us to abandon our commitment to the truths we understand and the covenants we have made. That is a third absolute truth: We do not abandon the truth and our covenants. We are cast as combatants in the war between truth and error. There is no middle ground. We must stand up for truth, even while we practice tolerance and respect for beliefs and ideas different from our own and for the people who hold them.

32. While we must practice tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs, including their constitutional freedom to explain and advocate their positions, we are not required to respect and tolerate wrong behavior. Our duty to truth requires us to seek relief from some behavior that is wrong. This is easy to see when it involves extreme behaviors that most believers and nonbelievers recognize as wrong or unacceptable. For example, we must all deplore murder or other terrorist behavior, even when done by extremists in the name of religion. And we must all oppose violence and thievery.

The Two-Sided Coin of Tolerance and Truth
33. As to less extreme behaviors, where even believers disagree on whether or not they are wrong, the nature and extent of what we should tolerate is much more difficult to define. Thus, a thoughtful LDS woman wrote me about her concern that “the world’s definition of ‘tolerance’ seems to be increasingly used in relation to tolerating wicked lifestyles.” She asked how the Lord would define “tolerance.”

34. President Boyd K. Packer gave an inspired introduction to this subject. Speaking to an audience of institute students three years ago, he said: “The word tolerance does not stand alone. It requires an object and a response to qualify it as a virtue. … Tolerance is often demanded but seldom returned. Beware of the word tolerance. It is a very unstable virtue.”

35. This inspired caution reminds us that for persons who believe in absolute truth, tolerance for behavior is like a two-sided coin. Tolerance, or respect, is on one side of the coin, but truth is always on the other. You cannot possess or use the coin of tolerance without being conscious of both sides.

36. Our Savior applied this principle. When He faced the woman taken in adultery, Jesus spoke the comforting words of tolerance: “Neither do I condemn thee.” Then, as He sent her away, He spoke the commanding words of truth: “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). We should all be edified and strengthened by this example of speaking both tolerance and truth: kindness in the communication, but firmness in the truth.

**Facing Profanity, Cohabitation, and Sabbath**

37. Let us consider how to apply that example to some other behaviors. Another thoughtful LDS member wrote:

38. “In Mosiah 18:9 Alma tells us that when we are baptized we covenant ‘to stand as “witnesses” of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in.’ … What does this scripture mean for our day and how can it be applied by Latter-day Saints?

39. “Living in the mission field, I often hear the name of the Lord taken in vain, and I also have acquaintances who tell me that they are living with their boyfriends. I have found that observance of the Sabbath is almost obsolete. How can I keep my covenant to stand as a witness and not offend these people?”

40. Profanity, cohabitation, and Sabbath breaking—excellent examples to illustrate how Latter-day Saints might balance their competing duties to truth and tolerance in their own lives in these difficult circumstances.

41. I begin with our personal conduct, including the teaching of our children. In applying the sometimes competing demands of truth and tolerance in these three behaviors and many others, we should not be tolerant with ourselves. We should be ruled by the demands of truth. We should be strong in keeping the commandments and our covenants, and we should repent and improve when we fall short.

42. As President Thomas S. Monson taught us in the conference where he was sustained as our prophet: "My young friends, be strong. … The face of sin today often wears the mask of tolerance. Do not be deceived; behind that façade is heartache, unhappiness, and pain. You know what is right and what is wrong, and no disguise, however appealing, can change that. The character of transgression remains the same. If your so-called friends urge you to do anything you know to be wrong, you be the one to make a stand for right, even if you stand alone.”

43. Similarly, with our children and others we have a duty to teach—such as in our Church callings—our duty to truth is paramount. Of course, teaching efforts only bear fruit through the agency of others, so they must always be done with love, patience, and persuasion.

44. I turn now to the obligations of truth and tolerance in our personal relations with associates who use profanity in our presence, who live with a partner out of wedlock, or who do not observe the Sabbath day appropriately. How should we react toward and communicate with them?

45. Our obligation to tolerance means that none of these behaviors—or others we consider deviations from the truth—should ever cause us to react with hateful communications or unkind actions. But our obligation to truth has its own set of requirements and its own set of blessings. When we “speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25), and when we “[speak] the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) as the Apostle Paul taught, we are acting as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, doing His work. Angels will stand with us, and He will send His Holy Spirit to guide us.

46. In this sensitive matter we should first consider whether or the extent to which we should communicate to our associates what we know to be true about their behavior. In most cases this decision can depend on how directly we are personally affected by it.

47. Profanity consistently used in our presence is an appropriate cause for us to communicate the fact that this is offensive to us. Profanity used out of our presence by nonbelievers probably would not be an occasion for us to confront the offenders.
48. Cohabitation we know to be a serious sin in which Latter-day Saints must not engage, whatever the circumstances. When practiced by those around us, it can be private behavior or something we are asked to condone, sponsor, or facilitate. In the balance between truth and tolerance, tolerance can be dominant where the behavior does not involve us personally. If the cohabitation does involve us personally, we should be governed by our duty to truth. For example, it is one thing to ignore serious sins when they are private; it is quite another thing to be asked to sponsor or impliedly endorse them, such as by housing them in our own homes.

49. On Sabbath observance, Latter-day Saints know that we are taught to observe the Sabbath day in a different way than many other Christians. Most of us are troubled by packed shopping centers and other commercial activities on the Sabbath. Perhaps we should explain our belief that our observance of the Sabbath, including our partaking of the sacrament, restores us spiritually and makes us better people for the rest of the week. Then, to other believers, we might express appreciation for the fact that we share common ground on what is most vital because each of us believes in God and in the existence of absolute truth, even though we differ in our definitions of these fundamentals. Beyond that, we should remember the Savior’s teaching that we should avoid contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29–30) and that our example and our preaching should “be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness” (D&C 38:41).

50. In all of this we should not presume to judge our neighbors or associates on the ultimate effect of their behaviors. That judgment is the Lord’s, not ours. Even He refrained from a final mortal judgment of the woman taken in adultery. Tolerance requires a similar refraining in our judgment of others.

**Four Principles of Truth and Tolerance When Seeking Government Action**

51. Having discussed the balancing of truth and tolerance in our personal behavior and in our relations with associates, I come to a different and more difficult circumstance. When believers enter the public square to try to influence the making or the administration of laws motivated by their beliefs, they should apply some different principles.

52. As young adults, you may wonder why I am speaking to you about the principles we should follow when we seek government action, such as by the legislature. You might say, “That is a matter for senior Church authorities to handle.” I describe these principles to you young adults because you are current members and future leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ, and you will need to decide these kinds of questions sooner than you think. You will need to understand how our efforts in the public square are informed by the balance between truth and tolerance.

53. Whether or how we might seek to obtain laws that would compel or influence behavior that we deem desirable because of our belief in God and His commandments is too large a subject for adequate treatment in the concluding few minutes of my talk. I will, therefore, limit myself to describing four paramount principles that should govern such an effort.

54. First, when believers in Jesus Christ take their views of truth into the public square, they must seek the inspiration of the Lord to be selective and wise in choosing which true principles they seek to promote by law or executive action. Generally, they should refrain from seeking laws or administrative action to facilitate beliefs that are distinctive to believers, such as the enforcement of acts of worship, even by implication. Believers can be less cautious in seeking government action that would serve principles broader than merely facilitating the practice of their beliefs, such as laws concerning public health, safety, and morals.

55. In any event, as defenders of the faith, believers can and must seek laws that will preserve religious freedom. Along with the ascendancy of moral relativism, the United States is experiencing a disturbing reduction in overall public esteem for religion. Once an accepted part of American life, religion is now suspect in the minds of many. To them it has become something that must prove its legitimacy as a part of our public life. Some influential voices even question the extent to which our constitution should protect the free exercise of religion, including the right to practice and preach religious principles.

56. This is a vital matter on which we who believe in a Supreme Being who has established absolute right and wrong in human behavior must unite to insist on our time-honored constitutional rights to exercise our religion, to vote our consciences on public issues, and to participate in elections and debates in the public square and in the halls of justice. In doing so we stand with angels. We must also stand shoulder to shoulder with other believers to preserve and strengthen the freedom to advocate and practice our religious beliefs, whatever they are. For this purpose we must walk together on the same path in order to secure our freedom to pursue our separate ways when that is necessary according to our separate beliefs. Guided by heaven in this righteous cause, our words will be sweet and find place in the hearts of many.
57. Second, when believers seek to promote their positions in the public square, their methods and their advocacy should always be tolerant of the opinions and positions of others who do not share their beliefs. We should not add to the extremism that divides our society. As believers, we must always speak with love and show patience, understanding, and compassion toward our adversaries. Christian believers are under command to love their neighbors (see Luke 10:27), to forgive (see Matthew 18:21–35), and to do good to those who despitefully use them (see Matthew 5:44). They should always remember the Savior’s teaching that we “bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]” (Matthew 5:44).

58. As believers, we should also frame our arguments and positions in ways that contribute to the reasoned discussion and accommodation that are essential to democratic government in a pluralistic society. By this means we will contribute to the civility that is essential to preserve our civilization.

59. Third, believers should not be deterred by the familiar charge that they are trying to legislate morality. Many areas of the law are based on Judeo-Christian morality and have been for centuries. Our civilization is based on morality and cannot exist without it. As John Adams declared: “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

60. Fourth, believers should not shrink from seeking laws to maintain public conditions or policies that assist them in practicing the requirements of their faith where those conditions or policies are also favorable to the public health, safety, or morals. For example, even though religious beliefs are behind many criminal laws, and some family laws, such laws have a long-standing history of appropriateness in democratic societies. But where believers are in the majority, they should always be sensitive to the views of the minority.

61. We Latter-day Saints are sometimes accused of being self-righteous and intolerant of others, especially where we are in the majority or where others are in the majority and our beliefs cause us to oppose them. Surely Latter-day Saints do need to be more wise and skillful in explaining and pursuing our views and in exercising our influence when we have it.

62. That is the spirit of the two-sided coin of truth and tolerance. President Thomas S. Monson has provided an excellent example of the practice of these twin virtues. Throughout his life he has been exemplary in reaching out and working with the members and leaders of other faiths in cooperative efforts on matters of common interest and in the Christian fellowship and concern that have no denominational boundaries.

63. Finally, the spirit of our balance of truth and tolerance is applied in these words of President Gordon B. Hinckley: “Let us reach out to those in our community who are not of our faith. Let us be good neighbors, kind and generous and gracious. Let us be involved in good community causes. There may be situations, there will be situations, where, with serious moral issues involved, we cannot bend on matters of principle. But in such instances we can politely disagree without being disagreeable. We can acknowledge the sincerity of those whose positions we cannot accept. We can speak of principles rather than personalities.”

The Gift to Know and the Gift to Believe

64. I close with this assurance and this testimony:

65. The Bible teaches that one of the functions of a prophet is to be a “watchman” to warn Israel (see Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7). In revelation the Lord added this parable for modern Zion: “Set … a watchman upon the tower, who will “[see] the enemy while he [is] yet afar off” and give warning to save the “vineyard from the hands of the destroyer” (D&C 101:45, 54).

66. I have spoken to you as one of those watchmen on the subject the Spirit has assigned me. I assure you that my message is true. If you have doubts about this, or if you have questions about how to apply these principles in your own life, I urge you to seek guidance from the same source.

67. On the broader question being widely agitated by the atheists of our day, I proclaim my knowledge that God lives! His creations witness His existence, and the atheists of our day, I proclaim my knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, … crucified for the sins of the world; and that it is given to others “to believe on their words” (D&C 46:13–14). As one who knows, I invite you to believe on my words.

68. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the vineyard. He is our Savior, and He reaches out to each of us with the timeless invitation to receive His peace by learning of Him and by walking in His way (see D&C 19:23):

69. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

70. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
71. “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

72. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes
1. We have gathered together as one, we have taken upon us the name of Jesus Christ, and we are Christians. One of the questions we would ask: why then, if we have that love of the Savior, would someone want to be an antagonist or to attack us?

2. Recently a group of bright, faithful young Latter-day Saints wrote down some of the most pressing questions on their minds. One sister asked, “Why doesn’t the Church defend itself more actively when accusations are made against it?”

3. To her inquiry I would say that one of mortality’s great tests comes when our beliefs are questioned or criticized. In such moments, we may want to respond aggressively—to “put up our dukes.” But these are important opportunities to step back, pray, and follow the Savior’s example. Remember that Jesus Himself was despised and rejected by the world. And in Lehi’s dream, those coming to the Savior also endured “mocking and pointing … fingers” (1 Nephi 8:27). “The world hath hated [my disciples],” Jesus said, “because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). But when we respond to our accusers as the Savior did, we not only become more Christlike, we invite others to feel His love and follow Him as well.

4. To respond in a Christlike way cannot be scripted or based on a formula. The Savior responded differently in every situation. When He was confronted by wicked King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the moneychangers who were defiling the temple, He exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which was sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered the incomparable Christian response: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

5. Some people mistakenly think responses such as silence, meekness, forgiveness, and bearing humble testimony are passive or weak. But to “love [our] enemies, bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]” (Matthew 5:44) takes faith, strength, and, most of all, Christian courage.

6. The Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrated this courage throughout his life. Though he “suffer[ed] severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious” (Joseph Smith—History 1:27), he did not retaliate or give in to hatred. Like all true disciples of Christ, he stood with the Savior by loving others in a tolerant and compassionate way. That is Christian courage.

7. When we do not retaliate—when we turn the other cheek and resist feelings of anger—we too stand with the Savior. We show forth His love, which is the only power that can subdue the adversary and answer our accusers without accusing them in return. That is not weakness. That is Christian courage.

8. Through the years we learn that challenges to our faith are not new, and they aren’t likely to disappear soon. But true disciples of Christ see opportunity in the midst of opposition.

9. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Abinadi was bound and brought before the evil King Noah. Although the king vigorously opposed Abinadi and eventually sentenced him to death, Abinadi boldly taught the gospel and bore his testimony anyway. Because Abinadi took advantage of that opportunity, a priest named Alma was converted to the gospel and brought many souls unto Christ. The courage of Abinadi and Alma was Christian courage.

10. Experience shows that seasons of negative publicity about the Church can help accomplish the Lord’s purposes. In 1983 the First Presidency wrote to Church leaders, “Opposition may be in itself an opportunity. Among the continuing challenges faced by our missionaries is a lack of interest in religious matters and in our message. These criticisms create … interest in the Church. … This provides an opportunity [for members] to present the truth to those whose attention is thus directed toward us.”

11. We can take advantage of such opportunities in many
ways: a kind letter to the editor, a conversation with a
friend, a comment on a blog, or a reassuring word to
one who has made a disparaging comment. We can
answer with love those who have been influenced by
misinformation and prejudice—who are "kept from the
truth because they know not where to find it" (D&C
123:12). I assure you that to answer our accusers in this
way is never weakness. It is Christian courage in action.

12. As we respond to others, each circumstance will be
different. Fortunately, the Lord knows the hearts of our
accusers and how we can most effectively respond to
them. As true disciples seek guidance from the Spirit,
they receive inspiration tailored to each encounter. And
in every encounter, true disciples respond in ways that
invite the Spirit of the Lord.

13. Paul reminded the Corinthians that his preaching
was "not with the enticing words of man's wisdom,
but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1
Corinthians 2:4). Because that power resides in the
Spirit of the Lord, we must never become contentious
when we are discussing our faith. As almost every
missionary learns, Bible bashing always drives the
Spirit away. The Savior has said, "He that hath the
spirit of contention is not of me" (3 Nephi 11:29).
More regrettable than the Church being accused of
not being Christian is when Church members react
to such accusations in an un-Christlike way! May our
conversations with others always be marked by the fruits
of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,
goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance" (Galatians
5:22–23). To be meek, as defined in Webster's dictionary,
is "manifesting patience and longsuffering: enduring
injury without resentment." Meekness is not weakness.
It is a badge of Christian courage.

14. This is especially important in our interactions with
members of other Christian denominations. Surely our
Heavenly Father is saddened—and the devil laughs—
when we contentiously debate doctrinal differences with
our Christian neighbors.

15. This is not to suggest that we compromise our principles
or dilute our beliefs. We cannot change the doctrines
of the restored gospel, even if teaching and obeying
them makes us unpopular in the eyes of the world. Yet
even as we feel to speak the word of God with boldness,
we must pray to be filled with the Holy Ghost (see
Acts 4:29, 31). We should never confuse boldness with
Satan's counterfeit: overbearance (see Alma 38:12). True
disciples speak with quiet confidence, not boastful pride.

16. As true disciples, our primary concern must be others'
wellfare, not personal vindication. Questions and
criticisms give us an opportunity to reach out to others
and demonstrate that they matter to our Heavenly
Father and to us. Our aim should be to help them
understand the truth, not defend our egos or score
points in a theological debate. Our heartfelt testimonies
are the most powerful answer we can give our accusers.
And such testimonies can only be borne in love and
meekness. We should be like Edward Partridge, of
whom the Lord said, "His heart is pure before me, for
he is like unto Nathanael of old, in whom there is no
guile" (D&C 41:11). To be guileless is to have a childlike
innocence, to be slow to take offense and quick to
forgive.

17. These qualities are first learned in the home and family
and can be practiced in all our relationships. To be
guileless is to look for our own fault first. When accused,
we should ask as the Savior's Apostles did, "Lord, is it I?"
(Matthew 26:22). If we listen to the answer given by the
Spirit, we can, if needed, make corrections, apologize,
seek forgiveness, and do better.

18. Without guile, true disciples avoid being unduly
judgmental of others' views. Many of us have cultivated
strong friendships with those who are not members of
our Church—schoolmates, colleagues at work,
and friends and neighbors throughout the world. We
need them, and they need us. As President Thomas S.
Monson has taught, "Let us learn respect for others. …
None of us lives alone—in our city, our nation, or our
world."3

19. As the Savior demonstrated with Herod, sometimes
true disciples must show Christian courage by saying
nothing at all. Once when I was golfing, I barely brushed
up against a large cholla cactus, which seems to shoot
needles like a porcupine. Thorns from that plant stuck
all over my clothing, even though I had barely touched
the cactus plant. Some situations are like that plant: they
can only injure us. In such instances, we are better off
to keep our distance and simply walk away. As we do,
some may try to provoke us and engage us in argument.
In the Book of Mormon, we read about Lehonti and his
men camped upon a mount. The traitorous Amalickiah
urged Lehonti to "come down" and meet him in the
valley. But when Lehonti left the high ground, he was
poisoned "by degrees" until he died, and his army fell
into Amalickiah's hands (see Alma 47). By arguments
and accusations, some people bait us to leave the high
ground. The high ground is where the light is. It's where
we see the first light of morning and the last light in
the evening. It is the safe ground. It is true and where
knowledge is. Sometimes others want us to come down
off the high ground and join them in a theological
scrum in the mud. These few contentious individuals are
set on picking religious fights, online or in person. We
are always better staying on the higher ground of mutual
respect and love.
20. In doing so, we follow the example of the prophet Nehemiah, who built a wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah's enemies entreated him to meet them on the plain, where "they thought to do [him] mischief." Unlike Lehonti, however, Nehemiah wisely refused their offer with this message: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:2–3). We too have a great work to do, which will not be accomplished if we allow ourselves to stop and argue and be distracted. Instead we should muster Christian courage and move on. As we read in Psalms, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers" (Psalm 37:1).

21. Evil will always be with us in this world. Part of mortality's great test is to be in the world without becoming like the world. In His Intercessory Prayer, the Savior asked His Heavenly Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). But even as the Savior warned of persecution, He promised peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. … Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). I testify that with the mantle of His peace upon us, the First Presidency's promise will be fulfilled: "The opposition which may seem hard to bear will be a blessing to the kingdom of God upon the earth."4

22. To my inquiring sister and all who seek to know how we should respond to our accusers, I reply, we love them. Whatever their race, creed, religion, or political persuasion, if we follow Christ and show forth His courage, we must love them. We do not feel we are better than they are. Rather, we desire with our love to show them a better way—the way of Jesus Christ. His way leads to the gate of baptism, the strait and narrow path of righteous living, and the temple of God. He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Only through Him can we and all our brothers and sisters inherit the greatest gift we can receive—eternal life and eternal happiness. To help them, to be an example for them, is not for the weak. It is for the strong. It is for you and me, Latter-day Saints who pay the price of discipleship by answering our accusers with Christian courage.

23. I conclude by making the testimony of Mormon my own: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13). I bear my special witness of Him—that our lives can be everlasting because His love is everlasting. That we may share His eternal, unconditional love with our brothers and sisters everywhere, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.
Unit 6 Additional Readings
Links and QR Codes

**Elder Quentin L. Cook, “Let There Be Light”**

![QR Code for Let There Be Light](image1)

**Elder M. Russell Ballard, “Let Our Voices Be Heard”**

![QR Code for Let Our Voices Be Heard](image2)

**Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Religious Freedom”**

![QR Code for Religious Freedom](image3)