

Do What Is Right

RICHARD G. SCOTT

I know that most of you who gathered tonight from across the United States and Canada come with a determination to do what is right. You have had those feelings in your heart to live worthily no matter what others may say. I speak also to others present who want to have such feelings. You are of the finest generation that has come to earth. You have prepared yourself well in the premortal existence and have been selected to come forth in this singularly important time in the unfolding of Father in Heaven's plan. I am deeply moved to be in your presence. I realize that the majority of you do not have the slightest idea of how truly capable, noble, and wonderful you are.

I have prayed about, pondered over, and worked on this message because each one of you is an exceptional daughter or son of our Father in Heaven and I want to help you. Early on, I strongly felt impressed to discuss with you how to make your noble dreams and aspirations a reality. I am sure that each one of you has treasured dreams of what you want your life to be. Having moved down the path of life ahead of you, I have learned that while there are growing challenges along the way, life is most beautiful. As you continue to

exercise faith in the Master and are obedient to His commandments, you will receive magnificent blessings. Some of those blessings you will have dreamed about. Other blessings He plans for you are beyond anything you can conceive of now. My earnest desire is to help you live so that your worthy dreams become realities.

I have wrestled with many different ways to communicate principles that I know—if understood and applied—would greatly help you. As this evening approached, I realized I did not yet have a satisfactory way to express what I know to be true. Then a peace enveloped me. I felt that if I strive the best I can to talk to you, and you listen with an open mind and heart with real intent, having faith in the Lord, then it won't matter too much what I say. You will have impressions come to you that will be individually tailored to your needs. As you write those impressions down and follow them, they will be guidelines for your life and will help you realize your righteous dreams.

Richard G. Scott was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 3 March 1996.

You are at a time of life when there are many critically important decisions to be made, and you are understandably unsure of your capacity to make them. You live in a world where it is increasingly more difficult to assure that your worthy dreams and aspirations will come true by avoiding the allurements and temptations that Satan would put in your path to destroy you. You may have doubts about your own self-worth. You want to be accepted. You have questions about your future and about how to gain true and enduring friendships. You want to find an eternal companion who has the same deep desire to live worthily and to accomplish much of good in this life. For many, you want to know if the person you have growing feelings for is indeed the one to be your eternal companion. But you are not sure of your ability to decide. You are growing in spiritual discipline—that is, your ability to discern the promptings of the Spirit and your capacity to follow them. Over time, that capacity will increase and grow stronger until it becomes easier and easier to automatically do the right things. You have built a shield against temptation. But now, while that spiritual discipline is developing, you must be very careful to avoid choices that would take you from the path of happiness.

I have learned from personal experience how being helped to make the right decision at a critical time can bless your entire life. I have also seen by working closely with individuals who made wrong decisions how devastating that can be on the rest of their lives. My intent is to give you suggestions on how to be sure you make the right choices. I will share four personal experiences that taught me important lessons, with a sincere desire to help you gain confidence in making the right choices consistently in your life. Then I will try to identify how Satan works so that you will be more prepared to avoid the pitfalls he will place in your path.

In college I was given the privilege of joining a very elect honorary engineering society. As I attended the initiatory activities, everyone was drinking. I asked for a soft drink and was handed a glass. As I raised it to my lips, I could smell alcohol. I looked around the room. All the eyes were on me. These were professionals who had just given me a great honor. Should I pretend to drink so as not to offend? No. I sat the glass down and then noticed that three other inductees also sat their glasses aside. Do what is right and others will follow your example. Every time you make the right choice in the face of potential criticism, you build strength that makes it easier the next time. The reverse is also true. Satan counts on that.

One summer, as a teenager, I worked on an oyster boat off the coast of Long Island in New York to earn funds for college. The other members of the crew were seasoned oystermen, hardened by the harsh winter environment in which they spent much of their lives battling the icy ocean and raw wind to secure their catch. I was an enigma to them, easier to distrust than to understand. They shunned me as a company spy, then as a crazy kid who didn't know how to be a man. Later, I became better at my duties and tried to build friendships. They offered to make me "a real man" by joining them on their all-night indulgences. I thanked them but declined, and the tension grew more intense.

The summer weather was beautiful and the ocean magnificent. We were engaged in relatively simple tasks, such as transferring small oysters to a more distant portion of the sound where the nutrients accelerated their growth and improved their flavor. Except when a dredge full of oysters was dumped onto the deck, signaling a flurry of intense activity, there was much time for contemplation. While my deck mates dozed by their shovels, I read and pondered the content of the Book of Mormon. I cannot adequately express the powerful awakening within me that came from

those weeks of study of the Book of Mormon under singularly unusual circumstances.

We slept in envelope-type bunks sandwiched into the restricted space between the ship's diesel engine and hull. One night at dockside I retired early since some of the crew planned unrighteous activity outside our boat. I was suddenly shaken into consciousness by the powerful hand of a deck mate, Toddy, a giant of a man. He was brandishing a hammer in my face, and his breath reeked of alcohol. Stunned, I realized that there was no way that I could escape him. I thought I had come to the end of the road. Then I heard what he was shouting, "Scotty, get your fins and mask. There's a man overboard, and you can save him."

That night I learned a lesson I have never forgotten. Publicly the crew members ridiculed me, but privately they respected me for my standards. The confidence that came from that knowledge let me quietly help three of them with some serious personal challenges.

I know that you will find the same response as you consistently choose to obey your principles. You are establishing a reputation. When you make it clear that you will not vary from your standards, you will be led to individuals like yourself and the criticism from others will become less intense. Often those who publicly deride you for your high standards privately do not want you to violate them. They need your good example. Whether it be turning your back on an off-color joke, refusing to see an R-rated movie or videocassette, or walking out of a party that is moving in the wrong direction, make your standards clear to others by quietly making the right choices when the temptation is first presented. A decisive, correct choice made once and consistently kept thereafter will avoid much heartache. You then can use your energy in keeping your resolve rather than repeatedly wrestling with the same challenge. Also, you will greatly reduce the possibility that you will be overcome by temptation.

I grew up in a home where my father was not a member of the Church and my mother was less active. That all changed later, and they spent much of their life as temple workers. With that background I didn't know much about the Church, even though I thought I did. When I was about to graduate from the university, the Lord dropped an atomic bomb in my life. Her name was Jeanene Watkins. She was a beautiful girl. It took me a long time to date her because so many others recognized her wonderful qualities. As we began to date, I discovered that she was all I had ever dreamed of finding. I fell completely in love with her. I could tell she had deep feelings for me also. One night, when we were talking about the future, she carefully wove into the conversation an important comment. She said, "When I marry, it will be to a returned missionary in the temple." I don't remember anything else she said. I hadn't thought much about a mission and didn't understand much about temple marriage. I went home and couldn't think of anything else. I was awake all night. I couldn't do anything at the university the next day. Soon I was at the bishop's office, having prayed about the importance of a mission. We both went on missions, and when we returned were sealed in the temple. Much later I came to realize that she would have left me had I not made the right choices. Jeanene's courage in standing up for her dream of a temple marriage to a returned missionary, regardless of her love for me, has made all of the difference in our lives together. I will never be able to thank her adequately for not compromising her righteous dreams.

Your decisions are like switch points on a railroad system. They determine where you will end up in life. When you consistently make the right choices, you are the happiest, receive the greatest personal growth, and have the most productive life. When you make the wrong choices, you may find yourself at an entirely different destination than you want.

While there is the process of repentance to come back, it is often painful and sometimes leaves permanent physical scars that cannot be cured as well as your spirit can.

At one time I worked on the immediate staff of a very hardworking, demanding, misunderstood man who became the father of the nuclear navy that provided great protection for the United States at a critical time in world conditions. His name is Hyman Rickover. I have great respect for him. After eleven years in that service, I received a call from the First Presidency to preside over a mission. I knew I would have to tell Admiral Rickover immediately. As I explained the call and that it would mean I would have to quit my job, he became rather excited. He said some unrepeatable things, broke the paper tray on his desk, and, in the comments that followed, clearly established two points.

“Scott, what you are doing in this defense program is so vital that it will take a year to replace you, so you can’t go. Second, if you do go, you are a traitor to your country.”

I said, “I can train my replacement in the two remaining months, and there won’t be any risk to the country.”

There was more conversation, and he finally said, “I never will talk to you again. I don’t want to see you again. You are finished, not only here, but don’t ever plan to work in the nuclear field again.”

I responded, “Admiral, you can bar me from the office, but, unless you prevent me, I am going to turn this assignment over to another individual”

He asked, “What’s the name of the man who wants you?”

I told him, “President David O. McKay.”

He added, “If that’s the way Mormons act, I don’t want any of them working for me.”

I knew he would try to call President McKay, who was ill, and that conversation would benefit no one. I also knew that in the Idaho Falls area there were many members of

the Church whose families depended upon their working in our program. I didn’t want to cause them harm. I also knew that I had been called by the Lord. I didn’t know what to do. Then, the words of the song we sang tonight began to run through my mind: “Do what is right; let the consequence follow” (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 237). While I had never contacted a General Authority in my life, I had been interviewed by Elder Harold B. Lee, so I had a feeling to call him. I explained that the admiral would try to call President McKay and would make some negative comments, but everything was all right and I would be able to accept my call. While doing that, my heart kept saying, “Is this going to turn out all right or will somebody be innocently hurt who depends on our program for livelihood?” The song would come back: “Do what is right; let the consequence follow.” True to his word, the admiral ceased to speak to me. When critical decisions had to be made, he would send a messenger or I would communicate through a third party. We accomplished the changeover.

On my last day in the office I asked for an appointment with him, and his secretary gasped. I went with a copy of the Book of Mormon in my hand. He looked at me and said, “Sit down, Scott. What do you have? I have tried every way I can to force you to change. What is it you have?”

There followed a very interesting, quiet conversation. There was more listening this time. He said he would read the Book of Mormon. Then something I never thought would occur happened. He added, “When you come back from the mission, I want you to call me. There will be a job for you.”

You will have challenges and hard decisions to make throughout your life. Be determined *now* to always do what is right and let the consequence follow. The consequence will always be for your best good. You will learn that it is easiest over the long run to stand for what is right and do the difficult thing to

begin with. Once you take that position, following through is not too hard. An individual who cuts corners and justifies some departure from true standards, for whatever reason, finds that seeds are planted that produce problems later. Those problems are far more difficult to overcome than taking a correct stand initially.

Do what is right even though it seems you will be alone in so doing, that you are going to lose friends, that you will be criticized. What you will find is that by doing what is right, after a period of testing, the finest friends will be discovered and you can mutually support each other in your resolve to be obedient to all of the commandments of the Lord. I have never been sorry on any occasion that I stood for what was right even against severe criticism. You will learn that truth. You will also discover that when you have taken a determined stand for right, when you have established personal standards and made covenants to keep them, when temptations come and you act according to your standards, you will be reinforced and given strength beyond your own capacity, if that is needed. Difficulty comes when you enter the battle of temptation without a fixed plan. That is what Satan desires, for then you are ripe for defeat.

Now I want to deal with sensitive issues that are easier to talk about one on one—so, in my mind, I am going to try as hard as I can to imagine you as an individual seated somewhere in this large broadcast network wanting to know how to make your hopes and dreams for the future come true. I am going to try and block out everything and everybody else so that we can talk privately. You may want to do the same thing.

At this time of life, it is most important that your thoughts and acts be clean and pure so that the Holy Ghost can guide you. Satan is determined at this critical time of your life to overpower you, not with an onslaught of serious temptation suddenly presented but by carefully placed alluring, but seemingly

unimportant infractions of your long-established standards. He would use these temptations to skillfully lead you away from the path of righteousness. Satan knows that as long as you can be led by the Holy Spirit, you can resist him. He has no power over a righteous person. The Lord has made it possible for you to resist the devil's temptations. When obedient, you will be inspired to know what to do and have the capacity to do it.

So that you will be forewarned, I will try to show you how Satan works. Let us pretend that from the middle of this pulpit to my right, I place all of the good things that can be done in life. The farther from the center of the pulpit, the better they are. And on my left, all of the wrong things that can be done. The farther from the pulpit, the worse they are. Here in the middle it is difficult to discern where something is just a little good or a little bad. This is where Satan works with righteous people. This is the twilight zone where you cannot clearly discern between that which is good and that which is bad. It is easy to become confused here. Live well within the wonderful area of good the Lord has defined and you won't have any problems with temptation. If you are not sure whether something is appropriate to look at, to listen to, to think about, or to do—*don't do it*. You could be headed for one of Satan's traps.

Now, observe how Satan works. A righteous returned missionary meets a pure, lovely young woman. They are at an age where they can think seriously about marriage. They begin to date. He develops deep, beautiful feelings of love for her—and she for him. Neither one intends to do anything that is wrong. They have decided not to cross the boundary into Satan's territory. When he is with her he wants to express the feelings he has for her—somehow, after a while, holding her hand doesn't quite communicate what he feels. Each time they are together they do what they did the time before and a little more to physically

express their feelings. They move closer and closer to the boundary, but they are determined not to cross it. One day Satan plants the seeds of rationalization in their minds. By that I mean that he tempts them to believe that something that is really wrong can be twisted or justified to be acceptable because of their special circumstances. Rationalization is one of the devil's most effective tools. These thoughts are planted: "You really love one another. You plan to be sealed in the temple. You both are worthy and will be true to each other. You are an exception. You have not reached the limit." The boundary is moved farther to the left. So they continue their physical expressions. They are very much in love. Each time they become a little more intimate. Strong, powerful emotions are aroused, but they are sure they can control them. They are going to be sealed in the temple. Then those emotions become overpowering, and they commit acts that they had determined they would never perform outside of marriage. Their lives are terribly complicated—tragically and unnecessarily.

Please recognize that you cannot barely cross the boundary and not encounter the high risk of slipping and being led to places you have no intent of ever visiting or experiences you have no desire to ever have. That is how Satan works. He knows that the powerful emotions of sexual transgression are addictive. One act leads to another and to another. Appetites are generated and powerful emotions experienced until the transgressor loses all perspective of reality and is led deeper and deeper into sin, without recognizing how far he has wandered or how rapidly he is being imprisoned. You have seen how others begin with experimentation and then are drawn deeper and deeper into sin apparently without any recognition of how far they have fallen.

How can two people in love avoid crossing the boundary and falling into temptation? First, let us define love. To love another righteously is to protect, to elevate, to keep pure

and undefiled, to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of the other. To love is to hold in reserve sacred, intimate experiences for the sanctity of marriage. There, when they are properly used, they draw a couple together and strengthen them for the growing responsibilities of parenthood. They result in the formation of physical bodies for the spirit children Father in Heaven entrusts to a mother and father. In this sacred setting appropriate intimate expression is beautiful and purposeful.

Satan's agents speak of love, but it is really lust. It is the increasing gratification of personal appetites at the expense of another. It leads to serious violation of the commandments of God. Why does Satan concentrate so intently on sexual transgression? Because he knows that immorality feeds upon itself. At the same time it numbs spiritual sensitivity and will neutralize the will to resist. There is never any place for Satan's kind of love in your life. If elements of it have found place in a relationship, get rid of them—now.

Now some specific suggestions to help you keep from crossing the boundary:

- Choose voluntarily to do what is right. Only willing obedience yields the full blessings that come from obeying the commandments of God.
- Firmly establish personal standards. Choose a time of deep spiritual reflection, when there is no pressure on you, and you can confirm your decisions by sacred impressions. Decide then what you will do and what you will not do to express feelings. The Spirit will guide you. Then do not vary from those decisions no matter how right it may seem when the temptation comes. Don't take the first step, as innocent as it may seem. The realization of your dreams depends upon your determination to never betray your standards.
- Recognize that the boundary between good and evil never changes, but you can be tempted to color your perception of that boundary through rationalization. I mean by

trying to justify something you suspect or know is wrong as being acceptable in your special case.

- Surround yourself with good friends by being in the right places doing the right things. None of us are up all of the time. When you are down it is easier to make a serious mistake. Often, when you are down a good friend will be up and can serve as a reminder of your worthy goals. Some are so anxious for friendship and popularity that they compromise their standards. You will not obtain desirable friends that way, but you can lose your worthy dreams.
- Stay close to the Church. You will have a constant refreshment of your resolve to do what is right and will be strengthened by the example of others doing it.
- A safe rule to follow is to never do anything alone that you wouldn't do in the presence of parents shortly before marriage.
- Do not be misled by what the world defines as acceptable. To intentionally excite emotions that are reserved for sacred purposes within the covenant of marriage is seriously wrong. I solemnly witness that it is transgression to touch the private, sacred parts of another person's body except within the bonds of marriage between a man and woman. Satan has spread abroad the idea that much intimacy is permissible short of the final act among consenting individuals. That is a devastating lie. Such activity is a violation of the law of chastity, and it requires repentance. It is not only wise not to be immoral, it is a fundamental commandment of God that He considers to be very important.

Your spirit body was created by your Heavenly Father. Your physical body is made in His image. He can lead you to happiness beyond what you can imagine now. His purpose is to help you realize your fullest potential in growth, accomplishment, and happiness

while you are here on earth. His objective is your eternal happiness.

There is another who is extremely gifted, powerful, and brilliant—but devilish—whose purpose is to bind you to be his servant. One of the most powerful tools he has to take you from the course of happiness is to tempt you to experiment with intimate acts. Sexual transgression feeds upon itself. It stimulates powerful, physical emotions that become increasingly addictive. At the same time it numbs spiritual sensitivity and neutralizes your will to resist. Immorality is foreign to your nature. Knowing that, Satan will tempt you to begin with small addictive doses rather than tempting you to step from a clean and pure life directly into serious immoral transgression.

Nephi gave you a powerful way to succeed in overcoming temptation. He said:

Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction. [1 Nephi 15:24]

If there is anyone that hears this message that has seriously transgressed, with all of the tenderness of my heart I ask you to decide to repent, *now*. It is not good to violate the commandments of the Lord. It is tragic to do nothing about it. Sin is like cancer in the body. It will never heal itself. It will become progressively worse unless cured through repentance. You can be made completely whole, new, purified, and clean, every whit, through the miracle of repentance. If you have transgressed, please decide to see your bishop *now* so that your worthy dreams can be made reality.

For those who commit a serious mistake, Satan whispers: "Your life is ruined. There is no way back. You might as well continue in the path you are on." That is a lie. The Savior gave His life that even the most serious transgressions can be overcome and an individual can

be made new, clean, and pure through repentance and obedience to the Lord's commandments. To believe otherwise would be to deny the efficacy of the Atonement of our Savior.

In summary, your happiness—now, throughout this life, and on into eternity—depends upon your making correct decisions and holding fast to them. Some make choices based only on their own personal experience and trust little else. Some make choices by blindly following their peer leaders. Others choose what they think will provide the most friends and greatest success. Some wait for a challenge to present itself and then decide

what to do. Each of these alternatives can be disastrous.

With all of the love in my heart, I ask you to resolutely decide to keep the standards of the Lord. Please live so that the Holy Ghost can inspire you to consistently do what is right. I testify that as a result, your worthy dreams or something even better will be yours. Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you. They want your happiness even more than you can now possibly know. They will help you attain that happiness as you steadfastly do all you can to obey their commandments. I testify They love you and will help you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.