

THE ETERNAL NATURE OF THE LAW OF CHASTITY

by

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Part of being a chaste and holy and virtuous person is having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe what He has told us about being that way; in essence, to be like Christ is—pure, holy, and virtuous. I bear testimony to all of you that it is worth it to be clean. It is worth it to turn away from the world and worldly things and do those things the Master has asked us to do. The blessing that will come is peace of conscience. The peace that will settle upon you in being a virtuous person, in my judgment, is payment enough. But there are many, many other great promises the Lord has made to those who are pure and holy before Him.

Let me direct your attention, first of all, to the scriptures. I want to review what the Lord has said about chastity and his view of that from the scriptures as well as Satan's plan and what he does to try to thwart the Lord's plan. And then I'll center on some specific things that young people, especially, and older people as well, can do to be sure that they keep themselves pure and chaste throughout their whole lives.

Let's turn to D&C 131 and read the first four verses:

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.”

Now, what the Lord is telling us is that it isn't good enough to just seek for the celestial kingdom. We are to seek for the highest part in the celestial kingdom—exaltation. And unless you are married for time and all eternity, you will not have the great blessing that accompanies the promise the Lord has given to us of being exalted and thereby be able to have eternal increase—family. You would not attain that to which God has attained.

Sometimes young people say, “Elder Cook, why do the older people talk to us so much about chastity?” It seems like there are a lot of talks about that to younger people. And my response would be, “There's an awful lot at stake—like everything.” Have you ever thought before that the main reason, the principle thing, that distinguishes those who will be exalted in the top part of the celestial kingdom from all of the others is that they will have the blessing of being able to use the sexual powers that God has given to men and women. No one else will and that's a very significant thing to me. I would be quick to remind you that everything that is found in the passages in the revelations is calculated to take you to the top part of the celestial kingdom and nowhere else. They were written for that purpose. Sometimes I hear a young person say, “Well, I'll be thankful if I even make the terrestrial kingdom.” Well, he doesn't know what he's saying, does he? The passages, the church, the gospel, are calculated to take you to exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

Now, sometimes when we talk about that particular topic, some are a little uneasy and say in their hearts, “But Elder Cook I've never been married for time and all eternity. I've never had that opportunity.” It is interesting to me that a number of the prophets have extended a promise to the good sisters, especially, in the name of the Lord, that if they remain unmarried in this life through no fault of their own and will prove faithful, they will, in time, be married for time and all eternity. They will not lose one single promise or one single blessing they would have had otherwise had they had the blessing of being married in this life.

That would be true for the brethren, to some extent, but the brethren are in more of a position to ask, to pursue, and to be the aggressors. If a man goes through life and doesn't seek out a bride and ask her to marry him, he will have to face the consequences. That promise wouldn't apply to him if he had had opportunity to ask a young lady to be married and chose not to do so, or if, in the light of day, he chose to be married civilly and did not get married in the temple. I'm thankful that the Lord will make those decisions. No man will be able to judge that. The Lord Himself will make those judgments, and you can

be assured that they will be righteous judgments.

Now, again, the distinguishing difference between those who attain the highest part of celestial glory and all others is that they will be able to live in a family life. They will be able to live as husband and wife. They will be able to procreate and use those sexual powers that are God-given.

Let's look at some interesting verses that come from D&C 132. Verses 16 and 17 talk about those who do attain the celestial glory but not exaltation. These have always been sobering verses to me.

“Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

In other words, you will be an angel in heaven if you do not partake of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage and will be a servant, as it were, to those who did partake of that blessing of eternal marriage.

“For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever.”

Having been a married man for a number of years and having the blessing of having eight children, I cannot imagine any punishment that would be any more difficult than that. To be told that I would now be single through all of the eternities, worlds without end, and never be able to participate in the new and everlasting covenant of being eternally married to a faithful sister would cause me great grief and pain.

There is no question that the sexual desires that have been put into men and into women are of God. They are the means for procreating. They are the means for sustaining life upon the earth. They are the means for having children. These powers are to be preserved in marriage. They are not to be used out of marriage. They are only ordained to be used under the marriage covenant.

I've always liked this statement from the previous missionary lessons that says, *“This creative power necessarily carries with it strong desires and urges. Strong, because of the necessity to persuade men to accept the responsibility of a home and a family.”* And unlike the animal world where those urges come and go with the seasons, as it were, that is not the case with men and women. Those urges are strong and they are constant. And again, they are meant to be controlled properly. They are meant to be harnessed and controlled under the direction of the Spirit of the Lord so that they are used the way the Lord decreed that they ought to be used right from the foundations of the world. I repeat, one more time, if a man will keep the law of chastity, the blessings that will come from having so done will be of eternal benefit to him and to his family.

Let's talk for just a moment about Satan's plan. If you were Satan and knew what he knew from premortal life—that the whole plan of salvation rested upon marriage, husband and wife being together and bearing children in this world—would you not do your best to thwart that? Have you thought of that before? Can you not imagine that Satan would unleash all kinds of things to try to foul up that plan if he could? Certainly he would. Let me suggest some of Satan's plans relative to this thought.

1. **Restrict or Keep Spirits From Coming from the Premortal Life.** If you were Satan would you not do your very best to keep spirits from coming from the premortal life? Wouldn't that be a good move? If you could somehow stop that, you would thwart the plan of God. How does he keep children from coming from the premortal life?
 - a. **Birth control.**
 - 1) **Convince people to have no children.** There are certainly some husbands and wives around the world that have bought that idea. If, as Satan, I couldn't accomplish that, then I would work upon men and governments the best I could to limit the number of children. And there are countries where that is the case. There is one nation, without specifically naming it, that has a law about having only one child and penalties assessed against parents who would have any

more. That is purely a doctrine of Satan.

- 2) Sterilization. If Satan could get a male or female to be sterilized so they could have no children, he could really thwart not only the general plan of God in a sense, but the plan of God for that man or woman in large measure. It is a very serious thing.

b. Abortion.

If by chance a couple conceived a child, Satan might try to get them to abort it. Satan could still win that way. Satan and his servants will try to plant in the mind of a good sister or a good brother that that is a good thing to do. And with continued evil influence, unfortunately there are many, many who have done just that. I saw some statistics about two years ago indicating that there were as many abortions in California in one year as there were people living in the city of Oakland, California. Just imagine that. And that's not speaking disrespectfully of California because that could be true of any of the states and other countries. Satan has been most effective in cleverly sowing the satanic doctrine of aborting little children after they are finally conceived.

The after-effects of abortion on a good woman many times destroys the woman herself, her emotional stability and spirituality, and her closeness to God. I've talked to a number of women who have gone through that and who have had a very difficult time afterwards gaining control and stability of self as a result of that experience.

Satan also tries his best to have many of these children come to unwed mothers. With Satan's desire to really foul up the plan, if he cannot bring about an abortion he will at least try to bring them into broken families. That would give Satan a lot better chance to get a hold on them. He's pretty good at that and does his best to bring that about if he can.

2. Misuse of Sexual Powers. If the above attempts don't work, then Satan has more tricks to try. He will go after men and women and attempt to cause them to misuse their sexual powers. Thus, he will try to destroy their abilities to become gods, to be able to reach the celestial kingdom and have future children through exaltation as we have discussed. If Satan fails on the other alternatives, he will try to work on all of us to cause us to misuse these sacred powers that the Lord has given to us. And, be sure, he is a master at it.

Now, just one other comment about Satan. Listen to these two verses from 2 Nephi 2:17, 18, and 27:

"And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven [meaning Satan]; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.

"And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind...."

"... for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."

My, that's a sobering statement. Jesus seeks nothing but the happiness of his people. In great love, He will do anything to try to save us or redeem us and help us. Satan's motive is to make us miserable like he is. Thus, if any one has an idea that he can play around with Satan, even just a little bit, he is fooling himself. Satan is powerful. He knows a lot. He has had thousands of years of experience to tempt and try men and women much stronger than you are, and he has won in many cases. Thus, I would say to all of you, especially you young people, that you must be disciplined enough to not allow any evil in your lives. Allow a little bit in, and you will shortly have the rest.

Let's become a little more specific about how it is that Satan tries to get men to misuse these sexual powers as well as some preventive types of things that we can do to protect ourselves so that we would never stumble or fall or break the law of chastity in any degree. Remember, it is not just a suggestion to be chaste, but it is the law. What are some things that will

either lead ultimately to one breaking the law of chastity or that are related to chastity in part?

Responses from the Audience

- *The things we see on TV.*
TV can add a lot of evil things. There are good things on television, too, but many evil things come to us in that way.
- *Pornography.*
- *Clothing.*
Clothing and the way we dress or maybe don't dress is important.
- *Speech.*
The way we talk to one another, the language we use.
- *Cultural acceptance.*
Remember the quote about sin—that first we abhor it, then we tolerate it, and then we finally embrace it. And it seems to go in that pattern. If you start to tolerate it and say, “Well, it's not very good, but it's okay,” in a sense you're already in phase two, and before long, that which was really evil to you before is not so bad now.
- *Couples who choose to live together without being married.*
- *Masturbation.*
- *Music.*
Music can adversely affect us.
- *Peer pressure.*
Peer pressure can surely impact us and cause us to do some things we would otherwise not do.
- *Self-gratification.*
Selfishly seeking for what you want, the attitude of taking what you want instead of seeking to benefit and help other people.
- *No goals.*
To be bored, to have no direction, sometimes is just enough to get someone really involved in sin. There's the saying that “Idle hands are the devil's workshop.” I think there is a great truth in that and the reason why the Lord would command us to work all the days of our lives.
- *Drug, tobacco, and alcohol abuse.*
All of these things can ultimately lead to one breaking the law of chastity.

Thank you for your responses. In summary, let me note a few other serious sins that are totally against the law of chastity:

- Abortion
- Fornication
- Adultery
- Homosexuality
- Lesbianism

All of these things are serious sins. They are difficult for people to overcome if they get involved in them. And again, they

are directly opposed to the law of chastity in terms of one living a wholesome and pure life.

Now, if you were to imagine all of these on some sort of scale, I'm sure that most of you would be quick to realize that this last group are probably the worst. Let me mention that some have tried to suggest that homosexuality is not very serious, that it's not as serious as having sexual relations with the opposite sex. And of course, that is not true at all. It's at least that severe and probably more. It's a very, very serious sin.

Sometimes men are of a nature to say something like, "Well, I'm not responsible for these urges I have to break the commandments." "The devil made me do it." Or, "I didn't have control." They somehow try to not take personal responsibility for their own sins.

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 10:13:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

What a great witness from the Apostle Paul that you will never be tempted beyond what you can handle. And if you're a fairly weak person or a young person without much of a testimony, Satan is controlled, my young friends, that he cannot over-tempt you to a degree where you cannot handle it. And thus you will always be responsible for your own sins. He will tempt you up to your limit, I'm sure, but the Lord has him constrained so that he can't tempt you more than what you can stand. You can't ever blame it on the devil or on something else because the Lord has that set in such a way that you can never be overpowered with more than you can stand if you will abide the promptings that will come. We have a great promise that when those temptations come, the Lord will prepare a way for your escape—**if** you will take it. And that is the key: **I** you will take it.

As we discuss some stories through the rest of this talk, you will see that manifest many times. Sometimes a young person will hear the prompting and save himself. And other times, the person will hear the prompting but ignore it and lose his virginity.

As a student at a university in Arizona, I listened to a history professor teaching about World War II. He was describing some battles, and in the process of his description I learned a great lesson about chastity. He described a battle camp. Camp A was fighting against Camp B, and many soldiers were being killed on the front. And now a question: Do generals usually go into those areas? No, they don't. They are back a ways. They stay back out of that so as not to be killed. They are in what they call a command post, and in this command post are typically found those immediately around the general who are planning the battle. If you lose the command post, you may lose the battle, and you could even lose the war.

The generals typically create around the command post and the enemy what they call "lines of defense" or perimeters of defense to protect the command post from falling. Now, if one of those perimeters of defense collapses in some way, there are really only two choices. One is to quickly erect another command post for protection or, second, run the other way. As the teacher explained this, the thought came to me, "Well, isn't that really what the law of chastity is?" I think the Lord inspired me in this thought, "Gene Cook, in a sense, you're in your command post, your body." I am in my command post, and if I'm going to keep myself pure and holy, my object is to erect some lines of defense, some rules. And if I'll obey those rules, I'll always be pure and holy and chaste.

I desire to relate some stories to you now, and I want you to know that each of these stories is true. I learned the principles that will be listed from a handful of young people—and a few older people as well—who broke the law of chastity. Fortunately, in the Church the great majority of our young people—hundreds and hundreds of thousands—are pure and holy and have kept this commandment. But, there are some who have not believed, who have not obeyed, and who have broken the commandment. Some of them have talked to me in private interviews and have drenched my desk with their tears. They have said to me time and time again, "Elder Cook, if you ever have a chance to talk to the young people of the Church, please tell them this for me. Please tell them how dumb I was not to have realized that by participating in some "small thing" I ended up breaking the law of chastity." I would like to list thirteen lines of defense for your protection that have come from

some who know.

LINES OF DEFENSE

1. **Never be 100% Alone.** This has reference to not being out totally alone with someone of the opposite sex. In my mind, you would want to be careful of anyone who would like to get you out somewhere totally alone. Let me give this analogy, and I'm going to use the names John and Mary in these illustrations.

If John said to you, Mary, "You know, I've been studying the stars lately and have learned quite a bit. I'd like to drive you a little out of Salt Lake tomorrow night about 11:30 or so and show you a few things." What are you going to say, Mary? "No," aren't you?

What about a young man bringing you home from a date who says, "Mary, it's only 10:00. Your dad said you didn't have to be in until 11:30. My family is on vacation. Why don't we just slip into my house and watch TV for a little while?" What are you going to say, Mary? You would tell him to take you home right now, wouldn't you? You might even say, "We have a TV at our house, too, John, and my brother is at home."

I've never known anyone who broke the law of chastity who did not break this rule number one. It is recommended that members of the Church not date until at least age 16. The Church strongly recommends that you go out in fours or sixes or eights, or as a group before your mission—not just the two of you. It is recommended as well, for example, that you not go steady with the same person prior to your mission.

Remember, be aware of anyone who wants to get you alone somewhere, totally alone in the dark in the car in some solitary area. In a situation like that, "red flags" ought to go up. And when you see a red flag go up in your mind, you could say, "You know, that's one of the 13 lines of defense. No thanks." And you'll be able to back away and protect your own virginity.

Now, a little later on, perhaps when some of you have returned from your missions and are dating more seriously, seeking for a partner, there will be times when you will be out alone, just the two of you. But be very careful because Satan will do his utmost to try to cause you to break this sacred commandment.

You older folks, let's be sure that we not think these things apply just to the young people. President Kimball used to like to tell a story that went something like this. When he was a brand new member of the Twelve, he was driving to work on a rainy morning. Not far from his home he saw a very pretty, young, attractive secretary who was standing on the corner waiting for the bus. In his graciousness he thought, "Well, I ought to give this young lady a ride." So he stopped, opened the car door, and asked if she'd like to have a ride. And she said, "Well, sure I would." She jumped in and he took her on to the Church Office Building. In those days the parking lot for the brethren was right outside 47 East South Temple where General Authorities, in their offices, could see the cars pull in.

President J. Reuben Clark of the First Presidency just "happened" to be looking out the window when President Kimball drove up with this pretty young girl. Well, the young girl got out of the car and went on her way. Of course nothing happened, but it still was not right. President Kimball said something like, "When I got back to my office I had a phone call from President Clark. I was excited and raced down to his office thinking one of two things." He said, "I'll bet they're going to give me some new assignment here at headquarters or maybe a new assignment overseas or something." He was debating in his mind what President Clark might want to talk about.

When he got to his office, President Clark, being kind and careful in the way he approached it, said something like, "My, Spencer, you have a young wife," and he proceeded to go the rounds a little bit. Then he said, "Well, perhaps it was your daughter. It must have been your daughter." He pressed on a little bit and finally President Kimball realized what he meant. President Clark said, "You know, Elder Kimball, it isn't a good idea to do that. I know why you did it. Your motives were pure and right. I know that you wanted to be of help to this young lady. But it isn't right to be alone with someone else. It isn't right for the appearance of things. Someone could fabricate something

if they wanted to and cause you, Elder Kimball, a lot of problems. Even though they would have been lying, some might have believed. And thus, we have to avoid the appearance of evil as well as evil itself.”

I would suggest to those who are married that they would not want to be alone with someone else of the opposite sex other than their own spouse. Brethren, taking the Relief Society President home after a meeting would not be appropriate, maybe just innocently taking your secretary to dinner. Now, if you want to do something like that, make sure your wife is with you. Or, if you’re going to go to lunch, make sure that it’s done as a group. Be very careful because that is where problems begin.

2. **Learn to Say “No.” Plan it out in advance.** I think it helps, as a young person especially, to think through what you will say and do when you’re really tempted. What would you do if one of your peers came up to you and said, “Aren’t you going to smoke, even one time? Come on, you can try it once. Once is not going to hurt you a bit.” Will you be able to handle the peer pressure or will you cave in? You need to think that through beforehand and even practice a response or two perhaps. “No. No thanks. I don’t smoke. I’m surprised you do.” It might not work today but when I was younger we used to say, “No thanks. I don’t smoke cancer sticks. I’m not planning on going to the other life so soon.”

What would you do, Mary (speaking to the women), if John (a man) were trying to touch you in an inappropriate way? You wouldn’t want to say, “John, John, no” (in a whisper). It would be better to say, “John, John, no!” (in a loud voice) smacking him a good one. And if he’s a “good John,” he will be ever grateful that in a weak moment you were strong when he was not. If he were not a very “good John” and ever tried anything like that again, I would drop him immediately, sisters. No man has a right to touch or handle someone in an inappropriate way, and any appropriate touching is reserved for the sacred relationship called marriage. Be careful of someone who would try to suggest that that’s a part of love or that it’s okay to do that outside of marriage. It is not okay and it is against the law of chastity.

I hope this won’t sound too odd to some of you, but I found a good practice that served me well as a returned missionary. I was determined to find me a wife and to find one rather quickly, and the Lord blessed me to be able to do that. I determined that one of the principal characteristics would be that she would want to be a spiritual woman, someone who really had a powerful testimony, someone who was a clean, worthy, and faithful Latter-day Saint. Also, she really had to have the spark for me or I wouldn’t want to marry her. That’s a good part of marriage, too. It’s not all just spiritual, the other is a good piece of it, too.

I determined that the best way to go about this process was to ask my date to pray with me. So, the first time I took someone out, when we got to the car I would say, “Would you mind if we have a word of prayer before we go?” Most of the young ladies, all members of the Church, thought, “Well, no. That would be all right.” And then I’d either pray or ask her to pray. There were some who were shocked and maybe a little embarrassed, and that, for me, was reason enough to not keep dating those. It seems to me that if a young couple prayed that the Lord would protect them and help them to have an enjoyable time together, they would always be helped to do what is right.

3. **If Necessary, Run.** Some might say, “Well, that is too easy, Elder Cook. I already know that.” But some time ago I had an interview with a young lady who believed that but unfortunately did not do it. She told me that she was making out with her boyfriend and they were doing more than they ought to be doing. The prompting came from the Lord to stop right then and leave. But in her heart she thought, “I’ll just stay a little longer and convince him that we ought not be doing this.” Unfortunately, she lost her virginity that evening because she did not follow the prompting. She should have just run and left, but maybe for embarrassment or some other reason, did not.

Think of our great, great, great-grandfather Joseph in Egypt. He is a great example of running when necessary. The Book of Genesis tells us that he was tempted by Potiphar’s wife. She tried to convince him to break the law of chastity. He refused her and asked how he could offend either her husband or his God. He was a great man of integrity. The scriptures go on to tell us that he went into the house one time and found her there alone. She took him by his clothing—and she had to have been awfully close to him to grab his clothes. And the next verse says simply that Joseph fled. He ran. I’ve often thought, did Joseph stay to ask the golden question? Did he? Did he

stop to give her the lesson on the law of chastity? No, he ran.

Let me just say that if you're in a situation anywhere that is starting to heat up, and you are being stirred sexually in a way you ought not be and you have those promptings to get away, just run. Don't stop to wonder about it. Don't worry about embarrassing somebody else or yourself. Just get out of that situation immediately. Now, this is true for married folks as well. If you find yourself in a difficult situation, don't stop to think about it. Remove yourself from that situation immediately.

4. **A Little Bit Will Not Hurt.** I believe this is one of Satan's favorite sayings. A little bit will hurt.

5. **Obey the Word of Wisdom 100%.**

I recall interviewing a young priest who had been going out with some friends who were not such a good influence on him. These young men smoked and they had been working on this young man (we'll call him John) to smoke. He'd told them no many times, but he finally caved in and said, "Well, I think a little bit won't hurt. Just one." And he started smoking a bit. He went to the priests quorum one Sunday morning and while several priests were sitting there one of them began to sniff and said, "Aha, you've been smoking, John." John was terribly embarrassed and turned red-faced in front of everybody. As he left the meeting that day he thought, What shall I do? Do I continue to be friends with these priests or shall I go off with my other friends? Unfortunately, he decided to go with his other friends.

I met him six months after that "little decision" to smoke one cigarette. He had broken the laws relative to drinking alcohol and using drugs, and had even broken the law of chastity two times when he finally went in and confessed what he had done. He said to me through his tears, "Elder Cook, all for a dumb cigarette. That's what did it to me. If I had just not done that..." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I didn't realize that my friends were doing a lot more than smoking. But then I found out that they were drinking, too. Then I found they were doing other things worse than that and before I knew it, I was ensnared in it." And then again, he said, "For one dumb cigarette." That was a very, very telling story, my friends.

In talking about videos, some say, "Well, it just has one or two bad scenes." Remember, a little bit **will** hurt. A filthy scene is very difficult to get out of your mind. It's garbage. The key is to not allow it in the first place.

I remember another example of a young man who had resisted his friends who were on an athletic team who had pressured him to drink. He had done well in resisting them, but they continued to harp at him. He finally thought (erroneously), "If I do it one time—go to a bar with them and drink, I'll get them off my back. At least they'll leave me alone and quit teasing me about being a Mormon." And so he believed that lie.

Now, if you want to get a drink, where do you go? You don't go to the church or to the bishop's house, do you? You go to a bar. And there are a lot more things going on in a bar than just drinking, aren't there? There may be women who have more on their mind than just having a drink. Well, this 18-year old didn't think too much about that and went in to have a drink with the boys. An hour or so later he came out, an unchaste person.

Once again, having appropriately confessed to his bishop and stake president, he then wept in an interview with me. He sorrowed over the fact that he had been ensnared by "one dumb drink." He said, "Elder Cook, if you ever have a chance to talk to young people, tell them how dumb I was so they won't fall into the same trap." And it all began with just "one" drink.

6. **Select Good Friends.**

Now, an example about good friends. An old saying when I was young was, "We don't drink, we don't smoke, we don't chew, and we don't go with girls that do." In a way we were setting a standard for what kind of a girl we wanted for a girlfriend. Pick those who have your kind of standards.

Take a good look at your friends—male and female. If they're good and wholesome, you're fortunate, and you ought to keep them around and be loyal and true to them. If they're something less than that, you would do well to seek for some other friends. Some say, "I'm trying to help this nonmember even though he has all these bad vices and that." But remember, we have a program for that called "missionary work." Send the missionaries to him. We've lost many a young woman who has gone forward, in the name of missionary work, with the idea that she would date this young man and finally save him. We also have members now in the Church who became members, thanks to their spouses. That does happen on occasion. But we know of many, many more examples where it has not happened that way. My counsel, then, is if you have someone you really care about and want to see them join the Church, send the missionaries to him or work with them in a group, but not one on one.

One last reflection. As I think back to my youth, I was surely blessed to have some good young friends. There were two young men and one young woman that were very close to me. I can't think of a single instance where any of them ever suggested that we go do something evil or wrong. They were just good young people. I see them now as adults with their spouses and children and they are faithful and strong. I'm not surprised by that. I knew them when they were young and that is how they were then. Again, be careful who your friends are. There is a strong tendency to marry those with whom you associate, i.e., your group of friends. And that could be good or it could be bad, depending on who your friends are.

7. **Avoid Pornography 100%**. Pornography, in my judgment, is a disease. It is an addiction. Someone who gets started in it—looking at dirty movies, reading dirty books or magazines, listening to or telling filthy jokes—can become very quickly addicted to it. It is very difficult to stop doing it if you once get started. For some reason this seems to be a temptation, an affliction more for the young men than it is for the young women, although it can affect both.

I would counsel you young men, especially, to be very careful. Don't get started. What it does is incite in you a desire to see more, have more, do more. And if you persist in it, I can promise you that you will end up acting out your desires in time.

I am not surprised that President Benson would counsel us, as members of the Church, to avoid X-rated movies and even R-rated movies. Yet there are still many who are going to R-rated movies. I guess they have not really believed the President of the Church, and that is risky business. To me, some of the PG and PG-13 movies are even questionable.

I have had some adults say to me, "Well, I'm an adult. I can see an R-rated movie. Of course I don't let my children see them, but I do." The scriptures tell us to become like little children, and we ought not go where we can't take our children. If it's not good enough for your children, it's not good enough for you. We ought not have double standards. There is one standard and it's the Lord's standard and we ought to abide by it whether we're old or young.

Pornography can be found in magazines, novels, dance halls, some kinds of music, and even over the telephone. The best counsel I can give you is to just not be involved in any of these evil things. We want to be clean and pure and holy. Leave pornography alone, 100% alone.

8. **Avoid Impure or Intimate Language 100%**. I think of another young man (we'll also call him John) who confessed that he had broken the law of chastity. I asked, "Where did it begin, John? How did all of this start?" His answer was, "It began, in my case, with some dirty stories. Some boys told me these dirty stories and they were sensual and sexual in nature. It was rather exciting for a young boy. I heard them and then thought them through over and over. I began sharing them with some of my other male friends." And then he said, "I began sharing them with some girls. In the beginning they were embarrassed and some were offended. Then I began going with some girls who laughed and weren't embarrassed and that was my mistake."

Now, some adults have said that there are "adult jokes." There may be some that are funny jokes about married couples that maybe children wouldn't understand—assuming they're clean and wholesome and right. But again, there is one standard. If it's not wholesome enough for our children's ears, then it's surely not wholesome enough

for our ears, as adults.

9. **Avoid Natural Man Tendencies.** Sometimes we entertain improper urges that come and thus they lead up to one breaking the commandments. We need to recognize these “tendencies” and realize that Satan is behind them. Let’s read from 2 Nephi 28:20-23:

“For behold, at that day [today, Satan] shall ... rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

“And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

“And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—

And listen carefully to this:

“and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.

“Yea, they are grasped with death, and hell ...”

Satan speaks to us by whispering in our ears. The real you is the *spirit* inside of your body, and if Satan is going to communicate with you, one of the ways he does it is through your feelings and thoughts. He can whisper into someone’s mind and say, “Psst, John, look at that. That looks like a real good movie. Look at that video case.” And then he plants a thought or two that it would be okay, no one would ever know. We have all had times when we’ve had a really evil feeling or thought come to us. It just seems to come out of nowhere. I personally believe that Satan himself puts those feelings and thoughts into our minds to try to get us to respond to evil. If you turn that evil thought away immediately, he will not have power over you. But if you say, “Well, let me think about that for a minute,” and offer a chair, so as to speak to that thought and invite it to stay, Satan will be on the way to a victory.

Let me try to describe briefly some natural man tendencies, and I’ll do it from the point of view of a man trying to affect a woman. You know that there are ways—through innuendos—for a man to communicate things to a woman. For example, the way he might look at you. He could look at you in such a way that instead of seeing a sister in the gospel or a good friend, he might see something else. A good woman would probably normally be able to recognize that kind of look rather quickly. A lot can be communicated by your eyes as you look at someone.

Another way to affect someone would be through using words with double meanings, words that would cause someone not to know for sure what you mean. That would perhaps be a tricky way of taking the “temperature” of a woman to see where she was at. These kinds of things are going on constantly in the world and we need to be aware of them and avoid them as they are natural man tendencies.

One could perhaps twist something innocent into something else—maybe turn it to his own advantage and for his own purposes. Sometimes things are inappropriately said in notes, something that is full of innuendos, or just a lovey-dovey type note to someone who is not your wife. It can be done in a joking or kidding way, but it could be misunderstood and you will, if you participate in that kind of an activity, be playing with fire.

Inappropriate body movement and getting too close to a person physically could definitely convey some things, couldn’t it? Even something as simple as a handshake. It could be a polite and quick handshake between a man and a woman, or it could be a lingering one. President Kimball used to say that a good man and a good woman would want to lovingly greet each other with a handshake and nothing more. He used to teach the idea that a

priesthood leader or a good man would not want to put his arm around someone else's wife and tell her what a wonderful woman she is, that it's much better to just shake hands with her. Again, inappropriate body contact can cause things to start to happen, and thus you want to be very, very careful of that.

Some young people have gotten into some bad habits of giving and receiving back-rubs. Believe me, that is totally inappropriate. A young man might say, "Boy, I've got such a sore back. I was out shoveling snow all day and I'm so sore up here on my right shoulder. Do you think you could kind of work on it a little bit?" With that you have crossed the line. It's a danger signal because you don't have a right to touch any other person, basically, except shaking their hand or loving them the way you might your own sister. Be very careful because body contact can convey some things that ought not be conveyed.

Let me make another comment about the eyes, about taking inappropriate second glances. Sometimes a person will see something inappropriate and instead of turning away will try to get a second look. And that is allowing the natural man to take command. I've loved the statement that says that a true servant of the Lord, in an immodest moment for someone else, will cast his eyes down or away.

Now just another reminder for some who are older. You may at times be placed into circumstances in Church callings, for instance, where males and females work together very closely. Or even a supervisor and secretary situation when you're with your secretary much more than you are with your own wife. In those kinds of situations, one must be very circumspect, much more than you might normally be, because of the time you spend together.

I've interviewed a number of married men over the years who began to talk intimately with their secretaries, who shared too much. They told of their personal problems or listened to theirs. These kinds of intimate talks can lead to something inappropriate.

Watch for the warning signals as they will come. Warning signals will come when something is wrong. The Lord can and will alert us if we let Him. We ought to be willing to be transparent so people can see the whole of our lives. If there is something we're covering up, then that is something that needs to go. We ought to be the same person at work or school as we are at church. There may be a time when you get into a situation quite innocently, but you will still be alerted. The key is, get out as soon as that prompting comes. If you'll do that, the Lord will bless you. And if you try to play around with it in the least, it is very likely that you will be burned.

May I caution you to also be careful with inappropriate compliments—either given or received. Satan knows when you're vulnerable to that sort of thing. He seems to know our weaknesses and he watches for moments when he could have an impact on us. Satan has been around a long time and he knows all the tricks.

The Lord has told us very simply and clearly:

"Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else."

That's pretty strong language. We are not to love our spouses with only part of our heart but with all of it.

10. **Select Wholesome Music.** Sometimes young people have a feeling that the music they listen to doesn't have anything to do with chastity. And yet, as I've had opportunity to interview many youth in varying countries throughout the world, I've found that is just not so. I believe, without any doubt, that there is music of the Lord. I also believe there is good music that men have created—some romantic music, maybe some good cowboy music, and just plain fun songs, etc. Those can be okay. They can cheer you up and they're fun to be involved with. It ought not surprise us that the devil has his own music as well. That kind of music is found throughout the world and has a great impact upon young people especially.

Let me try to bring this principle alive by relating a true story that happened with an individual of whom you probably have heard. How many of you have heard of Mick Jagger? I think almost everyone has as he is one of the most famous rock stars in the world. Well, you might be surprised to know that I had about 2-1/2 hours with him on

an airplane and it was quite an experience. I'm going to relate part of that to you to try to illustrate this important point about selecting wholesome music.

Mr. Jagger and I were on a flight that originated in Mexico and were headed, I believe, to either Houston or Dallas. As I sat down in the plane, the seat next to me was empty. Later a man came and sat down by me. I noticed immediately that he was reading a rock magazine. I offered a silent prayer as I often do when I try to talk to people about the Church. I prayed that the Lord would inspire me in what to say as I talked to this man. After the prayer, I said something like, "My name is Gene Cook, I'm a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What's your name?" And he said, "My name is Mick Jagger." Not realizing then who he was I said, "Well, I'm glad to meet you, Mick." And then he said, "I said my name is Mick Jagger." I said, "I heard you, Mick." And then he opened up the magazine and pointed to his picture and said, "This is me." Of course, then I finally realized who he was. I just hadn't ever thought about sitting next to him, but it was so.

What I'm going to say is, in no way, speaking evil of Mick Jagger himself. Please understand that. I'm not speaking evil of the man, but I am of what he represents because it is wrong. It is of the devil himself, in my opinion.

Even before I knew who Mick was, I noticed that his pant leg was pulled up a little on his calf. As I looked at his leg I thought for some reason, "This fellow looks a little sick." I'm not sure why, but that caught my attention before I even knew who he was.

After we visited back and forth a minute or two about what we were doing and all, I finally said something like, "You know, Mick, I have a question for you that I'd like you to answer for me." He said, "Well, I'll be glad to try." Then I said to him, "I have opportunity to be with young people in many different places around the world, and some of them have told me that the kind of music you and others like you sing has no effect on them, that it's okay, and that it doesn't affect them adversely in any way. Then other young people have told me very honestly that your kind of music has a real effect on them for evil and that it affects them in a very bad way. You've been in this business for a long time, Mick. I'd like to know your opinion. What do you think is the impact of your music on the young people?"

This is a direct quote, brothers and sisters. He said, "Our music is calculated to drive the kids to sex." Those were his exact words. I'm sure I had a real look of shock on my face in receiving such a bold response. He quickly added, "Well, it's not my fault what they do. That's up to them. I'm just making a lot of money."

Then he told me he'd been in Mexico making a video because he could make it for about one-third of what it would cost in the United States. He told me this was a great day for them because now instead of just having audio where they could portray some of what they wanted to about sex and all, they now had videos and could have the people both hear it and see it portrayed. He said this would have much more impact on the youth, that his music was selling much more, and thus he was making much more money.

As I said, we talked for a couple of hours. Let me just share a few things that happened because it teaches the importance of what we are discussing with respect to music. As we chatted, I told him that I was married and had eight children. He told me that he was not married but that he had three children and was proud of it. He told me that he had one woman pregnant in Virginia, one in New York, and one in England, as I recall. He told me that it didn't matter what you did in life, that you could take whatever you wanted, and that you could do whatever you wanted. He said there were no commandments, there was no God, and nothing really mattered. He indicated there was no judgment day and that you could just do whatever you felt like doing. Whatever I told him in our discussion was white he said was black. And whatever he said was white I told him was black.

He indicated that he had had the missionary lessons. In the beginning I didn't believe that, but as we talked further I think he probably had. He told me he had had two or three lessons, and I think that was probably true because of some of his responses to me. According to him, he had been taught by missionaries in England.

He said, "As I listen to you Mormons, your problem is that you think you have all things figured out. Life isn't that

simple.” Then he would go on and explain some complex things, some theory of man. I would answer him in a very simple way from the scriptures, and he would say, “See what I mean?” He was always trying to make things much more complex than they really were.

Our conversation continued. He told me he believed in evolution and that he also believed he had descended from a monkey. I told him, with a smile, “That might be the only thing you’re right about.” We pursued the idea of evolution and the fact that if one is going to subscribe to the philosophy that he did, then he’d have to believe there was no God and that he must have evolved. And if there is no God, there are no commandments. There are no rules, and thus you can do whatever you want. He told me the importance, in his view, of freeing up the youth. He felt that they ought to be able to do whatever they wanted in spite of their parents. He said that parents were inhibiting them too much and controlling things and they ought not be doing that. It was truly astounding to me. He told me he was thankful the family, as an entity, was being destroyed. And I gathered from what he was saying that he was doing his best to help that along.

I’ve only been mad at two investigators in my life where I kind of got upset, and he was one of them. As we proceeded in the discussion, he probably had four or five alcoholic drinks. As you know, when one does that he tends to be a little looser in the way he talks and thinks. Finally, in a rather loud voice towards the end of our discussion, he said something like, “Furthermore, about your Book of Mormon—your Book of Mormon is a lie, and any man that believes it is a liar.” He said it in such a way that most people nearby could hear it. That really did upset me. I thought to myself, here’s a man who is representing evil and trying to announce it now to the whole cabin to try to make them feel that the Book of Mormon is not true.”

I then felt impressed to say something like, “Well, Mick, you’re mighty fortunate today. Mighty fortunate.” He said, “What are you talking about?” And I said, “Because you’re sitting next to a servant of the Lord who plans on correcting what you just said.” He then said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Well, you’re really lucky. I just happen to have a Book of Mormon right here in my briefcase,” and I pulled out a Book of Mormon and put it on his lap. I told him something to this effect, “Mick, this book has changed my life. I love the Book of Mormon. And I have read it many, many times. It is the greatest book, in my mind, on the face of the earth. In my view it has changed me, it has made me a better man. You say it’s a lie. I must have missed that part. Show me.”

My young friends, there was just total, dead silence. He didn’t say a word. I finally said, “Well, maybe you were offended by the part where Lehi told his sons to be honest men or where he taught them to rely upon the Lord and have faith in God. Maybe you were offended when Alma told his boy, Coriantumr, that he had broken the law of chastity and then told him what he had to do to correct it. Maybe that offended you. Or maybe it was the part when Christ came to America that really bothered you when he said that one is to love his wife with all his heart and not commit adultery. Maybe that offended you.” I carried on a little bit with him that way, and, of course, again he said nothing. I finally said, “Well, if you can’t show me a chapter, then at least show me a page, or maybe a paragraph will do. That would be all right. Just show me one paragraph.” And again, brothers and sisters, dead silence. I finally said, “Well, then how about a line, or one word.”

I finally bore my testimony to him and said something like, “My friend, the lie is not in the Book of Mormon. The lie is in you. And I bear witness to you in the name of the Lord that if you don’t turn your life around, you’ll be going to hell. The devil himself will come and get hold of you.” I bore my testimony to him as strongly as I could about what he was doing, that it was not right, and that it was not according to the Lord’s plan.

I felt very emotionally involved when I bore my testimony because I thought to myself, “Here I am going about the earth trying to strengthen young people, trying to make them better, strengthen them, and turn them to the Lord. And men like this are coming around right behind me trying to tear it all down, destroying the family, and destroying their reliance upon God. I bore a very fervent testimony to him and told him that I would be a witness that I had at least given him “the word.” Well, he calmed down quite a bit in that encounter and didn’t say any more. That at least quieted him down so he didn’t continue in the vein he was in.

Just before our couple of hours together concluded he said, “Oh, now I remember something about your Book of

Mormon” (referring to my challenge to him to show me something that was out of order). He said, “Well, here it is. It’s the part about Brigham Young.” Then I informed him that Brigham Young was not mentioned in the Book of Mormon one time. My response kind of took him back. We talked the last five to ten minutes in a more general way and then finally bid each other farewell and split up.

As I arrived home from that trip and shared the experience with my family, I was very moved, as you would have been. I was mostly moved by the spirit of what I felt. It was the Spirit of the Lord that bore witness to me of the evil nature of that kind of music and the impact it has on people. In our Family Home Evening that night, we made a commitment, as a family, that we would never, ever allow any of that kind of music in our home. Not ever! We had a great spiritual experience together where we felt the Spirit and committed to that decision.

Now, as those years have gone by since I visited with him on the plane, I’m pleased to say that that kind of music has never been in our home and I think never will be as a result of that experience. I share it with you to impress upon your minds that there is music of the Lord and there is music of the devil. I would be mighty, mighty careful with the music you listen to. The Church isn’t ever going to publish a list of approved songs and say, “Here are 146 that you can listen to and 246 that you can’t.” You’ll have to choose, won’t you? Use your conscience. Use the Spirit of the Lord and have enough sense to make those judgments correctly and don’t listen to that kind of music.

Just one other comment. A few days after I arrived home, my wife and I were up late on a Friday evening. I turned the television on, or maybe we looked in the paper, and saw that there was going to be a Mick Jagger special on that night. Well, I’d never even watched anything like that before and I thought, well, let’s see what it’s like. So we sat up for an hour or so and watched his show. I was really taken back. Not so much by what I saw, as I expected that, but by all the innuendos sown in the lyrics of which a young person might not be very aware. Lyrics like, “Do what you want. No one can tell you what to do. You’re your own man. Take what you want. Pick what you want.” It was the same stuff I’d heard on the airplane for two hours—there were no rules in it, no God in it, no “what’s right” in it. It was, you do whatever you want to do. You’re free, you can take what you want, do what you want.

I was very much taken back by how those thoughts had been sown very subtly in all that music. Many young people would not realize how those thoughts are sown in. However, after listening to that music time after time, one can begin to parrot that kind of philosophy and those inward feelings to their parents and thus not be as obedient as they ought to be. I bear testimony to you, again, that good music can have a great impact on you and evil music surely is of the devil.

Think of the great contrast in the lyrics, “I am a child of God and He has sent me here, has given me an earthly home, with parents kind and dear. Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way. Teach me all that I must do, to live with Him some day.” What a dramatic difference. That hymn would lead you to think of the Lord, wouldn’t it? It would humble you in your heart. It would lead you to be obedient to your parents. Look at the different impact that would have.

What if you sang a song like, “Oh my Father, thou that dwellest in the high and glorious place, when shall I regain thy presence and again behold thy face? . . .” (*Hymns*, No. 292). What if you had that in your repertoire, as it were, of what you sang, of what you thought, of what you listened to. What a difference! Little Primary songs like, “Jesus said love everyone, treat them kindly too, when your heart is filled with love, others will love you.” Very simple, isn’t it? One of my favorite ones is an easy one, a simple one. “Oh Father look on us today and bless us with thy love. In Jesus’ name we humbly pray, O Father up above.” So simple, isn’t it? I have sung that song to myself many times as I have wandered around alone in airports or other places to keep my mind focused on good, worthy things.

Think of the impact on you or your children in singing over and over, “I love to see the temple, I’m going there some day, to feel the Holy Spirit, to listen and to pray. For the temple is a house of God, a place of love and beauty. I’ll prepare myself while I am young. This is my sacred duty.” Wouldn’t that have a great impact? It would, and one day your children would end up in the temple. If the music is of this other kind, they may end up somewhere else.

11. **Be 100% Modest.** This is surely a key point in maintaining one's chastity. Adam and Eve, in the beginning, were told to dress themselves and properly cover up their bodies. Their bodies were "the temple of God." Their bodies were not to be shown to just anyone but were to be reserved for their mate in the sanctity of marriage. I think it is very significant that the devil would work on that in today's world. He knows those rules, and he will do his best to try to get us to inappropriately show off our bodies. I think a good example for all of us to hold up before us is a good man or woman who has been to the temple. Dress like they dress and you'll be safe.

Sisters, you would not want to have a really low neckline of any kind. You would not want to have a high skirt line that showed off more than it should from the knee and above. You also would not want to have a slit in your skirt, for example, to show off a little bit more of your thigh. Would the Lord ever inspire a good sister to do that? Of course He would not. Again, you would not wear transparent blouses or clothing that was too tightly fitted. Satan is the one who would inspire this kind of behavior.

I talked to a young woman some years ago (I'll call her Mary). She said, "Elder Cook, by the time I reached the age of 19 I had never had a date." (She was a reasonably attractive girl, but for some reason no one had ever asked her out.) She was broken-hearted about it and felt she would do anything to go on a date. Unfortunately one of her so-called "friends" said, "Your problem, Mary, is that you don't know how to dress. Let me teach you." Mary listened to her and was taught how to expose a little bit more here and a little bit more there, and sure enough, it had an effect on the boys. The boys who were attracted were not those who could be good husbands. They were interested in a lot more than just "seeing" an immodestly dressed girl. In her own words, "It all started when I began to dress immodestly." Later she ended up breaking the law of chastity.

Satan doesn't usually start out trying to get us on some big issue. He starts out on little items and just tries to get us to be a little more worldly than we ought to be. Some of those things might be the following:

- Jewelry - we ought not overdo jewelry.
- Makeup - we ought not overdo makeup.
- Hair - hairstyles ought not be extreme and men ought to be careful with their hair length.

The Lord's way is to be temperate, to be moderate. A warning signal that one might be stepping over the line a little is when he feels he has to have the best and latest fashion. That is trying to be more worldly than we ought to be. Be very careful with that.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to interview some young women who were determined to be dressing immodestly. That was not a very comfortable assignment for me. Their employer thought they should be dressing more modestly. They had been talked to privately by their supervisors but had pretty much rejected that counsel, and thus they were sent to talk to me about it. Even though it was a difficult assignment I learned something important. Not one of those young women *thought* she was being immodest. It raised a thought in my mind then that there really is a difference between what men perceive and what women perceive. Women are not nearly as affected by some of that as men are, and women think men think and feel like they do—and they don't.

The best counsel is to just be sure we appropriately cover our body such that we are not exhibiting anything more than we ought to be. *There ought never be anything about you that comes over more strongly than the real you.*

These two passages say it best:

"If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things"
(Article of Faith 13).

"And ye must practice virtue and holiness before me continually. Even so. Amen." (D&C 46:33.)

12. **Avoid Petting 100%.** And that means to avoid touching or stimulating another person, including yourself, in an inappropriate or sexual way. That is really out of order. You might imagine yourself sitting on a stack of dynamite

with all the fuses straight up and you ask me to toss you a torch. Now that would not be very good sense. Petting is just like that. It's dynamite. Any young man that would try to convince a young woman that petting is an appropriate way of showing her love for him speaks a lie. If he really loved that young woman, he would want her to be pure and holy and chaste. He would not try to get her to degrade herself by participating in something like petting.

After a discussion like this some years ago, a young man caught me alone and said, "Elder Cook, it sounds to me like I shouldn't even be kissing my girlfriend. You're pretty strict." I knew this young man and I knew he was french kissing his girlfriend and overdoing it. I said something like, "Well, that's not a bad idea—to not kiss your girlfriend." He was taken back and said, "Kissing doesn't affect me at all." Well, I certainly didn't believe that. I said, "Do you have any blood?" He said, "Yes." "Then it affects you," I said. He countered, "No, it really doesn't. It doesn't affect me." I said, "Well then, try this." (I told him something I had learned from Elder S. Dilworth Young.) I said, "When you take your girlfriend home tonight, why don't you just shake hands with her at the door and then kiss the post in front of her house." Well, this young man then said, "Well, I guess there is a difference." Of course there is a difference. Be very careful in your affections and reserve them for the one with whom you will kneel at the altar in the House of the Lord.

The principle, then, is that no one of us has a right to sexually stimulate any other person, including ourselves, except it is our own spouse.

I recall the case of a young man who was really tempted, severely tempted, by a woman who was somewhat older—a divorcee who had a fairly poor reputation. I'm not sure if this young man knew that or not, but he was severely tempted by her. One night he sneaked away from his house with this thought, "I'll just go pay her a visit. I mean nothing. I'm not planning on anything, but I'll just pay her a visit." He indicated that as he started to leave the house, he had a strong impression from the Lord telling him to go back home. He said, "I knew in my heart what I should do, but I continued on to her house. Before I got there, the impression came again to turn back. But unfortunately, I did not heed it." Then he said, "Within maybe 40 or 50 paces of her house, right during a light rainstorm, a lightning bolt came down and struck a tree not more than a hundred feet from where I was walking." He continued, "I don't know if that was by chance or something else, but I took it to be a signal." And then this young man turned around and went back to his own home.

Later this woman he had been planning to visit ended up being the cause of another young man being excommunicated from the Church. I am certain, without any doubt, that had that young man proceeded to that woman's house, he would have lost his virginity that night. We don't all have a lightning bolt come down and scare us into doing what's right, but promptings are real and they will come if we will heed them. If we do so, we will be protected.

Look at your hands for a moment, face up so that you can see your palms. Let this question pass through your minds: Where have these hands been? If, as a young man, you could say they have been passing the sacrament, or blessing the sacrament, or lifting up a sister when she fell down and hurt her knee, you could feel at peace in your heart. If you, as a sister, changed a diaper, cooked a meal, or read the scriptures, you, too, could feel at peace in your heart. If, however, you had to respond some other way, in a way that would cause embarrassment, remorse, and repentance, then perhaps you need to clean up your lives and be sure a peaceful feeling could again be in your hearts as you look at your hands.

13. **Control Your Thoughts.** We have learned, as human beings, that thoughts turn to acts and acts turn to habits. And habits will determine your ultimate destiny—either for good or for evil. Good thoughts will lead to good acts and good habits, and bad thoughts will lead to bad acts and bad habits. It seems to all begin in our minds.

I put this number 13, "control your thoughts," as our last line of defense as it holds up all the rest. It seems to be the foundation for what happens in your life. If you can control your mind and your thoughts, you will not have much problem with other things.

Let me list three suggestions about how to help control your thoughts.

- a. Pray. When temptations and evil emotions or feelings come upon you, pray with all your heart that the Lord will remove them from you. I am convinced that if you will humbly pray, the Lord will give you a new heart. He will give you new feelings that will help to chase away those evil feelings that were probably planted by Satan himself. None of us are protected from evil thoughts and they come to all of us. It is a matter of whether we chase them away or not. President Lee, as President of the Church, was asked if the devil ever bothered him. His answer was, “He is at my heels continually.” I was impressed that the devil was trying to get at President Lee, but even more so where he was at—at his heels!
- b. Read the scriptures/quote the scriptures. Memorize a passage or two of your favorite scriptures and say them out loud if you can when you are being tempted, and you will chase away the evil thought. In the three temptations that Christ suffered, his answer three times in a row was via a scripture. He handled Satan by quoting scripture.
- c. Sing hymns. When a bad thought or evil feeling comes, have a hymn or two memorized that can bring the Spirit of the Lord. Sing it out loud if you can. If you can’t do it out loud because you’re in a public situation, then, as taught one time by Elder Boyd K. Packer, give a nod to the conductor in your mind and start off the orchestra. If the thought persists, have the conductor turn up the volume a little bit so the orchestra drowns out the evil thought.

How about singing, “How great the wisdom and the love, that fills the courts on high . . .” or some of your favorites? It would be very difficult to pursue some evil intention or evil thought if you were to sing a hymn like that because it will bring the Spirit of the Lord. Sing in the shower or on the way to work or school. Get used to singing good, uplifting songs.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude with a couple of thoughts. You may know someone who has already broken the law of chastity—in part or all—and the best counsel I could give to that person is that they ought to humbly confess to the Lord what they have done and immediately see their bishop or branch president and confess to him as well. Some people think if they just pray away something like this in their bedroom, then that’s good enough. That is not so. The Lord has set up the procedure that we must go face to face and talk in confidence with our bishop or branch president. No one would need know it but you and him and the Lord. That is the way to become clean. These good bishops are talented, they know what to do, and they can help you put into place a plan so that you can become clean once again.

I love this passage in D&C 58:42-43:

*“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.
“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.”*

Again, the counsel that if you or anyone you know has had a problem, get them to their bishop. And then, thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ, that *“though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”* (Isa. 1:18). That is a great blessing. If we’ve stumbled a bit along the way, there is a way to become clean and fit to enter into the celestial kingdom.

I have always liked the statement, “If my heart is pure, I then have the strength of ten.”

Let me review some passages that have always meant a lot to me since I was a young man:

“... Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (3 Nephi 20:41).

I bear witness to the fact that if we will persist in our desire to be clean, pure, and holy before the Lord, sin will gradually begin to lose its attractiveness. Sin was designed to be attractive to men. What a great promise that if we will continue faithful, sin will begin to lose its attractiveness to us. Thus you will really become as God is with no desire whatsoever to do

wrong.

“And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which 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).

Again, a great promise that if we’ll persist, we’ll be able to finally have that gift given to us to not be attracted to sin.

“And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it.” (Mosiah 2:41.)

I bear testimony that keeping the law of chastity is worth it. To keep the commandments is worth it. You will be blessed both temporally and spiritually for doing so. Then this last promise:

“Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.” (D&C 121:45-46.)

I know of no greater joy than to kneel at the altar in the House of the Lord with someone worthy like you are, to know that you have kept yourself for them. And then by inviting the Lord into your marriage by being married in the temple, it becomes a marriage not just of two but of three. And the Lord, with the Holy Spirit of Promise, seals it up in time such that it can be a marriage that will last forever. There will also be a day when I believe we will kneel at the altar of God and our works and our very being will speak for itself whether or not we have kept the world out of us, whether we have truly been pure and holy.

I pray with all my heart that the Lord will bless each of us to have a greater commitment to do what is right, to truly keep ourselves pure before the Lord. If we do that, we will have added revelation and added peace come to us. We will have direction come from the heavens.

I bear witness that if we will keep the commandments and go forward and do these things, there is no reason we will not end up exalted in the celestial kingdom—because we will be as God is. May the Lord bless us to be in control of ourselves, to know the Lord’s protection is with us just through the veil, that He will provide a way for escape when temptations come. May the Lord bless us to that end I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

*NOTE: This talk can also be found on a cassette tape entitled “13 Lines of Defense: Living the Law of Chastity” by Elder Gene R. Cook