

FOR THE STRENGTH OF
YOUTH



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

This pamphlet summarizes standards from the writings and teachings of Church leaders and from scriptures. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have reviewed, accepted, and endorsed this pamphlet, which is printed at their request and with their approval for the information, guidance, and blessings of the youth of the Church.

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Our beloved young men and women,

We want you to know that we love you. We have great confidence in you. Because of that, we talk to you frankly and honestly.

We desire everything in this world for you that is right and good. You are not just ordinary young men and women. You are choice spirits who have been held in reserve to come forth in this day when the temptations, responsibilities, and opportunities are the very greatest. You are at a critical time in your lives. This is a time for you not only to live righteously but also to set an example for your peers. As you seek to live the standards of the Church, you will be able to reach out and lift and build your brothers and sisters.

God loves you as He loves each and every one of His children. His desire, purpose, and glory is to have you return to Him pure and undefiled, having proven yourselves worthy of an eternity of joy in His presence.

Your Father in Heaven is mindful of you. He has given you commandments to guide you, to discipline you. He has also given you your agency—freedom of choice—“to see if [you] will do all things whatsoever [He] shall command” (Abraham 3:25). Freedom

of choice is a God-given, eternal principle that carries with it moral responsibilities for the choices made.

We counsel you to choose to live a morally clean life. The prophet Alma declared, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Truer words were never spoken!

You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible! Years of happiness can be lost in the foolish gratification of a momentary desire for pleasure. Satan would have you believe that happiness comes only as you surrender to his enticement to self-indulgence. We need only to look at the shattered lives of those who violate God's laws to know why Satan is called the "father of all lies" (2 Nephi 2:18).

You can avoid the burden of guilt and sin and all of the attending heartaches if you will but heed the standards provided you through the teachings of the Lord and His servants.

We bear witness of the truth of these principles and promise you the blessings of the Lord as you keep the standards outlined in the scriptures and emphasized in this pamphlet. Among those blessings will be the constant and calming companionship of the Holy Ghost and the feelings of peace and happiness that you will experience.

We pray that you—the young and rising generation—will keep your bodies and minds clean, free

from the contaminations of the world, that you will be fit and pure vessels to bear triumphantly the responsibilities of the kingdom of God in preparation for the second coming of our Savior.

The First Presidency

Standards for the Youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Why Standards?

Standards are rules or guidelines given to help you measure your conduct. Why has the Lord given standards? He wants all his children to return to live with him one day. However, he knows that only those who are worthy will be able to live with him. Standards help you know how well you are preparing to live with your Father in Heaven. Your entire lives on earth are intended to give you the opportunity to learn to choose good over evil, service over selfishness, kindness and thoughtfulness over self-indulgence and personal gratification. By comparing your behavior and thoughts with your Father's standards, you are in a better position to govern yourselves and make the right choices. God's commandments (standards) are constant, unwavering, and dependable. As you adhere to them, you will receive countless blessings from heaven—including the gift of eternal life.

Dating

Begin to prepare now for a temple marriage. Proper dating is a part of that preparation.

In cultures where dating is appropriate, do not date until you are sixteen years old. Not all teenagers need to date or even want to. Many young people do not date during their teen years, because they are not interested, do not have opportunities, or simply want to delay forming serious relationships. Good friendships can be developed at every age.

When you begin dating, go in groups or on double dates. Avoid pairing off exclusively with one partner. Make sure your parents meet and become acquainted with those you date. Later the time will come for choosing just one. You may occasionally want to invite your dates to activities with your family.

Plan positive and constructive activities when you are together. Do things that help you get to know each other. Be careful to go to places where there is a good environment, where you won't be faced with temptation.

Because dating is a preparation for marriage, date only those who have high standards, who respect your standards, and in whose company you can maintain the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dress and Appearance

Servants of God have always counseled his children to dress modestly to show respect for him and for themselves. Because the way you dress sends messages about yourself to others and often influences the way you and others act, you should dress in such a way as to bring out the best in yourself and those around you. However, if you wear an immodest bathing suit because it's "the style," it sends a message that you are using your body to get attention and approval, and that modesty is not important.

Immodest clothing includes short shorts, tight pants, and other revealing attire. Young women should refrain from wearing off-the-shoulder, low-cut, or revealing clothes. Young men should similarly maintain modesty in their dress. All should avoid tight fitting or revealing clothes and extremes in clothing and appearance.

As Latter-day Saint youth, you can also show respect for the Lord and yourselves by dressing appropriately for Church meetings and activities, whether on Sunday or during the week. If you are not sure what's appropriate, ask for guidelines from your parents, advisers, and bishop.

Friendshipping

Everyone needs good friends. Your circle of friends will greatly influence your thinking and behavior, just as you will theirs. When you share common values with your friends, you can strengthen and encourage each other. If some of your friends are shy and do not feel included, be particularly sensitive to their feelings and go out of your way to pull them into the influence of your strong circle of good friends.

Together you can maintain a high standard of gospel living.

Treat everyone with kindness and dignity. Invite your nonmember friends to Church activities where they can learn about your standards and the principles of the gospel. Include them in your midweek activities and your Sunday meetings. Help them feel welcome and wanted. Many nonmembers have come into the Church through friends who have involved them in Church activities.

Honesty

Be honest with yourself and others, including the Lord. Honesty with yourself brings peace and self-respect. When you are honest with others, you build a foundation for friendship and trust. For example, honesty with your parents can help to establish a

trusting and lasting relationship with them.

Dishonesty hurts you and usually hurts other people as well.

Being honest with the Lord will bring his trust and blessings. Lying damages your spirit. Stealing or shoplifting does the same thing, as does cheating in school. The Lord said: "Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness" (Exodus 20:15–16).

Don't rationalize that wrong is right. Being honest includes having the courage to do what you know to be right.

Language

How you speak and the words you use tell much about the image you choose to portray. Use language to build and uplift those around you. Profane, vulgar, or crude language and inappropriate or off-color jokes are offensive to the Lord. They harm your spirit and degrade you. Don't lower yourself to use such language or jokes, even if people around you do. Never misuse the name of God or Jesus Christ. The Lord said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7). Set a positive example for your friends and others by using clean language to express your feelings.

Gossip is another kind of harmful language. When you say something bad about people who are not present or tell secrets you know about them, you are

gossiping. Gossip causes hurt and pain for other people. The Lord commands us to love one another. To follow this commandment, speak kindly and positively about others.

Media: Movies, Television, Radio, Videocassettes, Books, and Magazines

Our Heavenly Father has counseled us as Latter-day Saints to seek after “anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13). Whatever you read, listen to, or watch makes an impression on you. Public entertainment and the media can provide you with much positive experience. They can uplift and inspire you, teach you good and moral principles, and bring you closer to the beauty this world offers. But they can also make what is wrong and evil look normal, exciting, and acceptable.

Pornography is especially dangerous and addictive. Curious exploration of pornography can become a controlling habit leading to coarser material and to sexual transgression. If you continue to view pornography, your spirit will become desensitized, and your conscience will erode. Much harm comes from reading or viewing pornography. It causes thoughts within you that weaken your self-discipline.

Don't attend or participate in any form of entertainment, including concerts, movies, and videocas-

settes, that is vulgar, immoral, inappropriate, suggestive, or pornographic in any way. Movie ratings do not always accurately reflect offensive content. Don't be afraid to walk out of a movie, turn off a television set, or change a radio station if what's being presented does not meet your Heavenly Father's standards. And do not read books or magazines or look at pictures that are pornographic or that present immorality as acceptable.

In short, if you have any question about whether a particular movie, book, or other form of entertainment is appropriate, don't see it, don't read it, don't participate.

Mental and Physical Health

The Lord has commanded that you keep your body, mind, and spirit healthy. The Apostle Paul said: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). Nutritious meals, regular exercise, and appropriate sleep are necessary for a strong body, just as consistent scripture study and prayer strengthen the mind and spirit. Even those who are challenged by some physical limitations will be physically and spiritually benefited by observing proper health habits.

Hard drugs, wrongful use of prescription drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, and tobacco products—such as cigarettes, snuff, chewing tobacco, cigars, and pipe tobacco—destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Tobacco can enslave you, weaken your lungs, and shorten your life.

Any form of alcohol, including beer, is harmful to your spirit and your body. Drinking will dull your conscience, is expensive, and could lead to alcoholism, which is self-destructive, dangerous, and deadly.

When you observe the Word of Wisdom (see D&C 89) and other good health practices, you remain free and have control over your life. You gain the blessings of an undefiled body, an alert mind, and the ability to receive help and support from your Heavenly Father through the Holy Ghost.

Music and Dancing

Music can help you draw closer to your Heavenly Father. It can be used to educate, edify, inspire, and unite. However, music may be used for wicked purposes. Music can, by its tempo, beat, intensity, and lyrics, dull your spiritual sensitivity. You cannot afford to fill your minds with unworthy music. Music is an important and powerful part of life. You must consider your listening habits thoughtfully and prayerfully. You should be willing to control your lis-

tening habits and shun music that is spiritually harmful. Don't listen to music that contains ideas that contradict principles of the gospel. Don't listen to music that promotes Satanism or other evil practices, encourages immorality, uses foul and offensive language, or drives away the Spirit. Use careful judgment and maturity to choose the music you listen to and the level of its volume.

Dancing can be enjoyable and provide an opportunity to meet new people and strengthen friendships. However, it too can be misused. When you are dancing, avoid full body contact or intimate positions with your partner. Plan and attend dances where dress, grooming, lighting, dancing styles, lyrics, and music contribute to an atmosphere in which the Spirit of the Lord may be present.

Sexual Purity

Our Heavenly Father has counseled that sexual intimacy should be reserved for his children within the bonds of marriage. The physical relationship between a husband and a wife can be beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the procreation of children and for the expression of love within a marriage: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage as well as full fidelity after marriage. In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect to you. Never treat your date as an object to be used for your own lustful desires or ego. Improper physical contact can cause a loss of self-control. Always stay in control of yourself and your physical feelings.

The Lord specifically forbids certain behaviors, including all sexual relations before marriage, petting, sex perversion (such as homosexuality, rape, and incest), masturbation, or preoccupation with sex in thought, speech, or action (see *A Parent's Guide*, pp. 36–39).

Homosexual and lesbian activities are sinful and an abomination to the Lord (see Romans 1:26–27, 31). Unnatural affections including those toward persons of the same gender are counter to God's eternal plan for his children. You are responsible to make right choices. Whether directed toward those of the same or opposite gender, lustful feelings and desires may lead to more serious sins. All Latter-day Saints must learn to control and discipline themselves.

Victims of rape, incest, or other sexual abuse are not guilty of sin. If you have been a victim of any of these terrible crimes, be assured that God still loves you! Your bishop can also help and guide you

through the mental and emotional healing process if you seek his advice and counsel.

Scripture reinforces the foregoing teachings and standards: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. . . . Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:16–17, 19–21).

Sunday Behavior

The Lord has given the Sabbath day for your benefit and has commanded you to keep it holy. On this sacred, holy day, worship the Lord, strengthen family relationships, help others, and draw close to the Lord. Your dress before and after meetings should reflect your respect for the Sabbath.

Many activities are appropriate for the Sabbath; however, it is not a holiday. You should avoid seeking entertainment or spending money on this day.

When seeking a job, you may wish to share with your potential employer your desire to attend your Sunday meetings and keep the Sabbath holy. Many employers value employees with these personal convictions. Try to choose a job that doesn't require you to work on Sunday.

Spiritual Help

When you were confirmed a member of the Church, you received the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost. He can help you make good choices. When challenged or tempted, you do not need to feel alone. The Holy Ghost will help you know right from wrong, "For they that are wise . . . have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide" (D&C 45:57).

Repentance

Some people knowingly break God's commandments. They plan to repent before they go on a mission or receive the sacred covenants and ordinances of the temple. Repentance for such behavior is difficult and painful and may take a long time. It is better to not commit the sin. Certain sins are of such gravity that they can put your membership in the Church and your eternal life at risk. Sexual sins are among those of such seriousness.

Where choices have already led to sexual impurity,

repentance is the way back. Talk to your parents and your bishop. They love you and will explain to you how to repent and put your life in order again. Follow their counsel.

The miracle of forgiveness is real, and true repentance is accepted by the Lord. Full repentance of some sins requires that we not only confess and resolve them with the Lord but that we also do so with the Church. The bishop and stake president have been appointed by revelation to serve as judges in these cases.

Only the Lord can forgive sins, but these priesthood leaders can assist the transgressor in the process of repentance. In serious cases of transgression, Church disciplinary action could be required and disfellowshipment or excommunication could result. These actions are taken only when they are necessary in the repentance process. If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

As you follow these guidelines, you will feel and experience the power of the Spirit of the Lord, you will come to know the truth, and you will gain confidence in yourself and the Lord. The Savior taught, "The truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). As you grow in that truth and freedom, you will experience the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, a peace that brings great strength.

Conclusion: Worthiness and Service

Joy and happiness come from living the way the Lord wants you to live and from service to God and others. The Lord asks you to keep your life pure, seek his Spirit, maintain your self-respect, and be a good influence on your family and friends. Some of your friends or family may not live according to the Lord's counsel for his children. He asks you not to judge them, but to love them, seek appropriate ways to serve them, and be a light showing his way to them—he said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

One way you can show your love to others is through service. Seek for opportunities to serve others in your family, neighborhood, school, community, and Church. The scriptures remind us "that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). You can render service more effectively if you maintain high standards. Always take a stand for the Lord's way. He has promised to help you as you live gospel standards.

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