

What we are speaking about is so much more than merely deflecting temptations for which we somehow do not feel responsible. Remember, brothers and sisters, it is our own desires which determine the sizing and the attractiveness of various temptations. We set our thermostats as to temptations.

Thus, educating and training our desires clearly requires understanding the truths of the gospel, yet even more is involved. President Brigham Young confirmed, saying, “It is evident that many who understand the truth do not govern themselves by it; consequently, no matter how true and beautiful truth is, you have to take the passions of the people and mould them to the law of God” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:55).

“Do you,” President Young asked, “think that people will obey the truth because it is true, unless they love it? No, they will not” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:55). Thus, knowing gospel truths and doctrines is profoundly important, but we must also come to love them. When we love them, they will move us and help our desires and outward works to become more holy.

Each assertion of a righteous desire, each act of service, and each act of worship, however small and incremental, adds to our spiritual momentum. Like Newton’s Second Law, there is a transmitting of acceleration as well as a contagiousness associated with even the small acts of goodness.

Fortunately for us, our loving Lord will work with us, “even if [we] can [do] no more than desire to believe,” providing we will “let this desire work in [us]” (Alma 32:27). Therefore, declared President Joseph F. Smith, “the education then of our desires is one of far-reaching importance to our happiness in life” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 297). Such education can lead to sanctification until, said President Brigham Young, “holy desires produce corresponding outward works” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:170). Only by educating and training our desires can they become our allies instead of our enemies!

Neal A. Maxwell, in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1996, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 21

Additional scripture declares that God “made the world and all things therein, ... and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:24, 26). The commandment to love our neighbors without discrimination is certain. But it must not be misunderstood. It applies generally. Selection of a *marriage partner*, on the other hand, involves *specific* and not *general* criteria. After all, one person can only be married to *one* individual. The probabilities of a successful marriage are known to be much greater if both the husband and wife are united in their religion, language, culture, and ethnic background. Thus, in choosing an eternal companion, wisdom is needed. It’s better not to fly in the face of constant head winds. Occasional squalls provide challenge enough. Once marriage vows are taken, absolute fidelity is essential—to the Lord and to one’s companion.

Russell M. Nelson April 1995, pg 35

Abraham 1:8–11. Egyptian Human Sacrifice

President Joseph Fielding Smith, commenting on the human sacrifices that took place during the time of Abraham, wrote: “Abraham was of the [tenth] generation from Noah. Several hundred years had passed since the flood, and people had multiplied and spread over the face of the earth. The civilizations of Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria and the petty nations of Canaan, had been established. In the midst of this scattering the true worship of the Father was nearly lost. Sacrifice instituted in the days of Adam and continued in the practice and teaching of Noah, in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of Man, had become perverted. Instead of offering clean animals, such as the lamb and bullock, the apostate nations had dwindled in unbelief to the extent that human sacrifice was offered to their idol gods” (The Way to Perfection, 85).

Abraham 1:11. The Three Virgins

Elder Neal A. Maxwell discussed these three virtuous young women as “marvelous models on enduring uncertainty and on trusting God”: “Three young women whose names we do not have. They are mentioned in the book of Abraham, remarkable young women about whom I am anxious to know more. They were actually sacrificed upon the altar because ‘they would not bow down to worship [an idol] of wood or stone’ (Abraham 1:11). Some day the faithful will get to meet them” (“Not My Will, But Thine” [1988], 119–20).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

“For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor, and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also—counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ—requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God; but actual knowledge, realizing that, when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest, and be a partaker of the glory of God. . . .

“. . . A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth’s sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

“. . . It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him. . . .

“. . . From the days of righteous Abel to the present time, the knowledge that men have that they are accepted in the sight of God is obtained by offering sacrifice. . . .

“. . . Those, then, who make the sacrifice, will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God; and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith: therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority so to do, and without this guarantee faith could not exist” (Lectures on Faith, 68–70).

President Joseph Fielding Smith stated: “We all know something of the courage it takes for one to stand in opposition to united custom, and general belief. None of us likes to be ridiculed. Few are able to withstand popular opinion even when they know it is wrong, and it is difficult to comprehend the magnificent courage displayed by Abraham in his profound obedience to Jehovah, in the midst of his surroundings. His moral courage, his implicit faith in God, his boldness in raising his voice in opposition to the prevailing wickedness, is almost beyond comparison” (The Way to Perfection, 86).

The Challenge to Become

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

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

Persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world. (*Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32-34)

President Ezra Taft Benson said:

“The order of priesthood spoken of in the scriptures is sometimes referred to as the patriarchal order because it came down from father to son. . . .

“Abraham, a righteous servant of God, desiring as he said, ‘to be a greater follower of righteousness,’ sought for these same blessings. Speaking of the order of the priesthood, he said: ‘It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time . . . even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, our first father, through the fathers unto me.’ (Abr. 1:2–3.)” (“What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 9).

Abraham explained that he had “the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood” (Abraham 1:31). These records confirmed Abraham’s right to the priesthood. This can be traced in Genesis 5 (from Adam to Shem; see also Moses 6:8–25; 8:1–13) and Genesis 11:10–26 (from Shem to Abram [Abraham]; see also D&C 84:14–16; 107:40–52).

President Joseph Fielding Smith, speaking of the patriarchal organization from Adam to Moses, wrote: “The order of this priesthood which was established in the beginning was patriarchal. The authority descended from father to son, and those who held it were high priests. This order of descent from Adam to Noah is given in the Doctrine and Covenants. Noah, who stands next to Adam in authority, brought this priesthood through the flood, and it continued from generation to generation. Abraham, the 10th from Noah, received special blessings from the Lord, and the priesthood continued through him and his seed with the promise that all who received the gospel should be counted as Abraham’s seed and partake of his blessings” (Doctrines of Salvation, 3:160–61).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote: “After the immersion of the earth in the waters of Noah came a day of new beginning. As in Adam’s day, the faithful lived under a theocratic system, and as in the days before the flood, those who chose to live after the manner of the world set up their own governments and their own ways of worship. The seed of Shem, Ham, and Japheth began to populate the earth, and it so continued for more than four hundred years, when Abraham, who received theocratic power from Melchizedek, went down into Egypt. There he found a descendant of Ham, reigning as Pharaoh, whose government was patterned after the patriarchal governments of old, but which was devoid of priesthood and revelation, and hence, as far as worship is concerned—a worship prescribed, mandated, and commanded by pharaoh—had turned to idolatry.’ (Abraham 1:20–27.)” (A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, 660).

Talk of serviceman

It was just after the war; things were tense. We were at one of the upper camps where the planes could take off, and within half an hour they could be over on the Russian side. We were holding a noon meeting with our servicemen. They called on a young man to speak first. He announced his text from the prayer of the Master when he prayed for his disciples: "I pray not that thou should [CR, 116] est take them [my disciples] out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (John 17:15.) Then this lad delivered one of the finest talks on chastity that I have ever heard. He closed by saying, "Rather than lose my virtue, I would die and have my body sent home in a pine box and my dog tags follow after."

There was a hush over that audience of servicemen, and then he bore his testimony; and as he started to leave the pulpit, he stumbled and fell, draped over the pulpit. We lifted him off the pulpit and worked with him until he was revived, and then took him down in the audience. As they carried him down, the mission president said to me, "I wonder if he has a bad heart." And I said, "You know, I have had a feeling that there is something quarreling inside of him against what he has been saying to us."

When it came my time to speak, I said to him, "Now, my boy, you have made a profound impression upon all of us. You have said you would rather die than lose your virtue. But remember, the devil heard you, as we heard you, and if I don't miss my guess, he is going to make you prove that you would give your life before you would lose your virtue. You had better be on guard."

The group leader took me aside when the meeting was over, and he said, "You were hitting close to the mark, because up at the Chitose Airbase there has grown up one of the most filthy, rotten cities filled with prostitutes to try to entrap our men, and we have tried to keep them out of their clutches. But this boy had made a date with one of these hussies, as they called them, patriotic hussies; and we found out before he kept the date and said, 'Now look, we are not going to let you keep that date. Think of your mother; think of your sweetheart; think of your sisters. Now we will go down with you and help you break that date honorably.' "

This they did, and kept him under their surveillance for two weeks. They assigned him to do ward teaching, or home teaching, as they call it now; that meant, visit all the inactive boys in the camp. And two weeks later they assigned him to talk on the subject of chastity.

So the years passed. We were with President McKay at the dedication of the Los Angeles Temple. Between sessions I walked out to get some fresh air. As I walked up the west side of the building, I saw on the upper elevation a young man who seemed familiar to me, and I got closer to this young man that I had seen in Hokkaido, Japan. As he recognized me, he came running down the steps and threw his arms around my neck, and said, "Guess what! They have called me to be a worker in the Los Angeles Temple."

There was a lump in my throat because I was there at the crossroads when he almost made a fatal step that probably would have forfeited him the right to be a worker in the Los Angeles Temple. More years passed, and then I was out at a conference where he lived; and I saw a young couple walking down the aisle, the man holding in his arms a beautiful child, and a beautiful girl holding on to his arm, whom he introduced as his wife. As they uncovered the face of their new baby, I thought there was pride in the face of that young man because he knew as a young father that in the blood of his own child there was clean, pure blood. That is the reward that comes to one who passes the test.

Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, 115-16; or Ensign, July 1972, 102

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