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President Boyd K. Packer

How to Survive in Enemy Territory

PRESIDENT BOYD K. PACKER

President Boyd K. Packer is President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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Address at the “Commemorating 100 Years of Seminary” broadcast on January 22, 2012, at the Conference Center in Salt Lake City.

We celebrate 100 years of seminary in the Church. I hold on to a thread that goes back to the early days when the resources for this program were very scarce.

I traveled with President Spencer W. Kimball years ago. He held the office that I now hold as President of the Quorum of the Twelve. We were visiting seminaries for youth who attended Indian schools in Montana and South Dakota. We met in the one-room home of Sister Two Dogs. She was sitting on the bed, and about a dozen youngsters were gathered around her on the dirt floor. She was teaching a seminary lesson.

From those humble beginnings, we now have 375,008 students in seminary classes in 143 countries with over 38,000 volunteer and full-time teachers worldwide. The system of seminary is maintained at enormous expense given willingly by the Brethren responsible for the funds of the Church. We invest much in our youth. We know of your worth and your potential.

Wisdom Will Help You Combat the Enemy

I speak as one who has seen the past and would prepare you for the future.

I was trained by President Marion G. Romney, Counselor in the First Presidency. He once told me, “Do not just tell them so that they understand; teach them so that they cannot misunderstand!” He also taught me that I must have the courage of my convictions.

You are growing up in enemy territory. When you become mature spiritually, you will understand how the adversary has infiltrated the world around you. He is in homes, entertainment, the media, language—everything around you. In most cases his presence is undetected. Pornography is just one example.

I want to tell you that which will be of most worth and most desirable. The scriptures say, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom,” and I would add, “with all [your] getting, get [going]”!¹ I do not have time to waste and neither do you. So listen up!

Our Present Blessings Come from Past Sacrifices

The moment I decided to be a teacher is very clear in my mind. During World War II, I was in my early 20s and a pilot in the Air Force. I was stationed on the little island of Ie Shima. This island, a small, lonely one about as big as a postage stamp, is just off the northern tip of Okinawa.

One lonely summer evening I sat on a cliff to watch the sun go down. I remember looking at the moon and thinking, “That is the very same moon that shines down on my home in Utah.” I was pondering what I would do with my life after the war, if I was fortunate enough to survive. What did I want to be? It was on that night that I decided I wanted to be a teacher. I reasoned that teachers are always learning. Learning is a basic purpose of life.

I first taught seminary in 1949 in Brigham City. I had been a student in that seminary in my high school days. There were three of us as teachers: the principal, Abel S. Rich; Brother A. Theodore Tuttle; and myself. Brother Rich had opened that seminary as the second released-time seminary in the Church. The first was established in 1912—the Granite Seminary in Salt Lake City.

I learned much from Brother Rich. He was a prominent and successful community and Church leader. He was never hesitant. He taught me to consider a problem, determine what gospel principle was involved, and then make a decision. His philosophy was simply “Do what is right; let the consequence follow.”²

Brother Rich had lived through the history of seminary and talked freely about it. Through him I became acquainted with the old “warhorses,” as he called them.

As I think back, a stream of memories comes forward. I recall William E. Berrett, who opened seminary in the Uintah Basin. During the summer, he walked from town to town recruiting students for his class. The Berretts’ first child was born and buried there. Brother and Sister Berrett rode to the cemetery in the backseat of a car. On his lap was the little unpainted wooden casket that he had built for their son.

Brother A. Theodore Tuttle and I also served together as supervisors over seminaries and institutes and later together as General Authorities.

Brother Tuttle had been a lieutenant in the Marines. At the Battle of Iwo Jima, he returned to the ship to get a large flag. On shore he handed it to a runner who took it to the top of Mount Sirabachi and onto the pages of history. You may remember the famous picture of that flag being raised by servicemen. That event was later cast in bronze as a memorial in Washington, DC.

Another early teacher was Elijah Hicken, who was sent to the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming to open a seminary. He was unwelcomed. They had run out the teacher before him—very rough class! They did not want him there and thought to run him out, as they had others before him. His life was actually threatened. The patriarch came to him with a blessing and a promise that his life would be protected. On the strength of that blessing, Brother Hicken took off the six-shooter he had worn to class each day, and seminary was planted there.

I also remember a tall, smiling J. Wiley Sessions, who opened the first institute of religion at Moscow, Idaho, in 1926.

Strengthen Yourselves with the Words of Christ

There were three courses originally taught in seminary: Old Testament, New Testament, and Church History. It was my privilege to add an early-morning class on the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon had not previously been part of the curriculum because the students did not receive credit toward high school graduation. I had returned from the war with a testimony of the Book of Mormon and an understanding of how the gift of the Holy Ghost operates.

“The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.”³

Those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood confer this gift upon every baptized member of the Church—men, women, and children equally.

Let me quote an interesting verse from the Book of Mormon about angels and the Holy Ghost. A group had come to Nephi wondering what they should do after baptism. He said: “Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost? Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”⁴

Church Leaders Are Aware of You and Your Potential

Early in my years of teaching, I had a personal contact with Elder Harold B. Lee. I can remember standing with my wife outside the home of a counselor in our stake presidency, Eberhardt Zundel. I was serving as an assistant stake clerk. We were there for lunch between sessions of our stake conference. Elder Lee came out of the house and walked right up to me. I was speechless. There I was talking to an Apostle. (I have talked with a few other Apostles since that time!)

Elder Lee said, pointing to the Zundel home, “There are great men in there”—referring to the stake presidency. “You learn at their feet, and you will never be off course.” I teared up just a little, and Elder Lee said: “God bless you, my boy. One day you will carry great responsibility in this Church.” I suppose he said that to a lot of boys, but it had a profound effect on me. I remember the feeling I had in his presence.

A few years later I was speaking to seminary teachers in Salt Lake City. A call came telling me that I was to go immediately to the office of President David O. McKay. It was Saturday morning, and general conference was to convene shortly. I went quickly to President McKay’s office.

There was an attendant there, and he said, “What are you doing here?”

I said, “President McKay sent for me.”

He said, “That’s what they all say! You sit right there.” I sat right there!

Soon President Hugh B. Brown, Counselor in the First Presidency, came through the corridor and said, “What are you doing here? Why are you sitting here?”

And I said, “I can’t get in.”

He said, "I'll fix that." He ushered me into the office of President David O. McKay.

I went to sit across from his desk, and he motioned for me to come around. He had a chair behind his desk, facing him. President McKay took hold of both my hands and called me to be an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. That was the closest I had ever been to the President of the Church.

A few minutes later he looked at his watch and said, "We must go now to the Tabernacle. Sister Packer will just have to learn about this as it comes out over the air." And she did!

Fifty years and more than 2.5 million miles of worldwide travel later, I have an ever-deepening interest in the seminary and institute programs and more particularly in the youth.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost Will Protect You in Enemy Territory

You have been taught all of your lives about the gift of the Holy Ghost, but teaching can only go so far. You can and, in fact, you must go the rest of the way alone to discover within yourself how the Holy Ghost can be a guiding and protective influence.

For young men and young women, the process is the same. Discovering how the Holy Ghost operates in your life is the quest of a lifetime. Once you have made that discovery for yourself, you can live in enemy territory and not be deceived or destroyed. No member of this Church—and that means each of you—will ever make a serious mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

Sometimes when you have made a mistake, you may have said afterward, "I knew I should not have done that. It did not feel right," or perhaps, "I knew I should have done that. I just did not have the courage to act!" Those impressions are the Holy Ghost attempting to direct you toward good or warning you away from harm.

The Holy Ghost will withdraw if you participate in immoral practices or fill your mind with such things that come when one watches pornography.

You can quickly learn to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost. This power of revelation from the gift of the Holy Ghost operates on principles of righteousness.

There are certain things that you must not do if the lines of communication are to remain open. You cannot lie or cheat or steal or act immorally

and have those channels remain free from disruption. Do not go where the environment resists spiritual communication.

You must learn to seek the power and direction that is available to you, and then follow that course no matter what.

Prayer Is an Important Line of Communication

First on your “to do” list, put the word *prayer*. Most of the time your prayers will be silent. You can think a prayer.

Parents and teachers are concerned about the day that their children or youth are left on their own. You are never left outside the influence of a Heavenly Parent. He is our Father, and He is always there.

Sometimes it is hard for young people to confide in their parents. You can always have a direct line of communication with your Father in Heaven. Do not allow the adversary to convince you that no one is listening on the other end. Your prayers are always heard. You are never alone!

Keep Your Spiritual Receptors Strong

Take care of your body. Be clean. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”⁵

The Prophet Joseph Smith received the Word of Wisdom by revelation. In simple terms: no tea, coffee, alcohol, or tobacco.⁶ It was not known at that time that these things were bad for your health and can be addicting. The terrible plague of drug addiction was not understood then.

Read carefully the promises found in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants: “All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.”⁷

The Word of Wisdom does not promise perfect health but that the spiritual receptors within you might be strengthened. The certainty is that your body will, in due time, grow old and eventually become uninhabitable, and the spirit will be forced to leave. We call that death.

Stay away from tattoos and similar things that deface your body. Do not do that which would dishonor yourself, your parents, or your Father in Heaven. Your body was created in His image.

Unworthy people can be uncomfortable in the presence of someone who is virtuous. Do not be embarrassed by the teasing you may get from those around you. In the end, many will understand and respect you for your values.

Prophetic Counsel Teaches What Is True

I want to speak now in the Marion G. Romney pattern of straight talk about another matter. One thing that I have learned about young people through all of these years: You not only can take the truth, but you want to know the truth.

We know that gender was set in the premortal world.⁸ “The spirit and the body are the soul of man.”⁹ This matter of gender is of great concern to the Brethren, as are all matters of morality.

A few of you may have felt or been told that you were born with troubling feelings and that you are not guilty if you act on those temptations. Doctrinally we know that if that were true your agency would have been erased, and that cannot happen. You always have a choice to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost and live a morally pure and chaste life, one filled with virtue.

President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the following in a general conference:

People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves . . . gays and lesbians. My response is that we love them as sons and daughters of God. They may have certain inclinations which are powerful and which may be difficult to control. Most people have [temptations] of one kind or another at various times. If they do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church. If they violate the law of chastity and the moral standards of the Church, then they are subject to the discipline of the Church, just as others are.

We want to help . . . strengthen them, to assist them with their problems and to help them with their difficulties. But we cannot stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called same-sex marriage situation. To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families.¹⁰

President Hinckley was speaking for the Church.

Use Your Agency to Keep or Regain Safe Ground

The first gift that Adam and Eve received was agency: “Thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee.”¹¹

You have that same agency. Use it wisely to deny acting on any impure impulse or unholy temptation that may come into your mind. Just do not go there, and if you are already there, come back out of it. “Deny yourselves of all ungodliness.”¹²

Do not tamper with the life-giving powers in your body alone or with members of either gender. That is the standard of the Church, and it will not change. As you mature, there is a temptation to experiment or explore immoral activities. Do not do that!

It is natural to resist restraints of any kind. I realize that you do not like to be told what to do. But if immoral conduct is a temptation for you, I plead with you to do all in your power to overcome it, however difficult it may be.

The key word is *discipline*—self-discipline. The word *discipline* comes from the word *disciple*, or follower. Be a disciple/follower of the Savior, and you will be safe.

One or two of you may be thinking, “I am already guilty of this or that serious mistake. It is too late for me.” It is never too late.

You have been taught at home and in seminary about the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The Atonement is like an eraser. It can wipe away guilt and the effect of whatever it is that is causing you to feel guilty.

Guilt is spiritual pain. Do not suffer from chronic pain. Get rid of it. Be done with it. Repent and, if necessary, repent again and again and again and again until you—not the enemy—are in charge of you.

Lasting Peace Comes by Repenting Often

Life turns out to be a succession of trials and errors. Add “repent often” to your list of things to do. This will bring you lasting peace that cannot be purchased at any earthly price. Understanding the Atonement may be the one most important truth that you can learn in your youth.

If you are associating with others who drag you down instead of building you up, stop and change company. You may be alone and lonely at times. The important question may be asked then: “When you are alone, are you in good company?” If you are doing something that you know is wrong, stop it. Stop it now.

Unwinding a bad habit that you have allowed to entangle you can be very difficult. But the power is in you to do it. Do not despair. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “all beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.”¹³ You can resist temptation!

It is not likely that you will ever have a personal encounter with the adversary; he does not show himself that way. But even if he came personally to you to test and tempt you, you have an advantage. You can assert your agency, and he will have to leave you alone.

It is not easy. Life is not guaranteed to be either easy or fair. That is the test.

When you choose to repent, you will receive a testimony and know that the gospel is true. You will know what the Lord meant when He promised, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”¹⁴ And then this great scripture: “And [He] will remember [your sins] no more.”¹⁵ So why don’t you “not remember” them.

Take Advantage of the Blessings of Seminary

You are not ordinary. You are very special. You are exceptional. How do I know that? I know that because you were born at a time and in a place where the gospel of Jesus Christ can come into your life through the teachings and activities of your home and of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is, as the Lord Himself has said, “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.”¹⁶

There are other things we could add to the list, but you know what you should and should not be doing in your life. You know right and wrong and do not need to be commanded in all things.

Do not squander these years of seminary instruction. Take advantage of the great blessing you have to learn the doctrines of the Church and the teachings of the prophets. Learn that which is of most worth. It will bless you and your posterity for many generations to come.

Alma commanded his son Helaman: “O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.”¹⁷

People now, to a large extent, are tempted to surrender their agency or independence and replace it with the word *entitlement*. They expect that everything will be freely provided for them. If that pattern is in your thinking, get rid of it. If you want to be happy, you must pay the price through obedience. The restraints that you face against wrongdoing are an enormous protection for you.

When our children were little, they would sometimes say, “Do I have to do that?” The answer is, “No, you do not have to. You get to.”

Once you have this self-control in your life, you will not need to be told what to do all of the time. You will find your way and know where you fit in.

Some of you are floundering about and struggling to find what you will do. It does not really matter what you choose to do for a living. What matters is what you will be. You have the guidelines to know that. Remember the Spirit is always with you to teach you.

Not many years will pass until you are married and have children, a marriage that should be sealed in the temple. Our prayer is that you will find yourself, in due time, safely settled in a family ward or branch. You will find that you will learn more from your children than ever they will learn from you.

Go Forward with Hope and Faith

Do not fear the future. Do not fear what is ahead. Go forward with hope and faith. Remember that supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. Learn to be taught by it. Learn to seek it. Learn to live by it. Learn to pray always in the name of Jesus Christ.¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord will attend you, and you will be blessed.

The poet wrote,

So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, Thou must,
The youth replies, I can.¹⁹

We have a deep and profound faith in you. I bear my testimony to you—a witness that came to me in my youth. And you are no different from anyone else than I am. You have as much right to that testimony and witness as anyone. It will come to you if you earn it. I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you—the blessings of that witness to be in your life, to guide you as you make a happy future—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. **RE**

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Notes

1. Proverbs 4:7.
2. “Do What Is Right,” *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 237.

3. Articles of Faith 1:4.
4. 2 Nephi 32:2–3.
5. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
6. See D&C 89:5–9.
7. D&C 89:18–20.
8. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, November 2010, 129; see also Moses 3:5; Abraham 3:22–23.
9. D&C 88:15.
10. Gordon B. Hinckley, “What Are People Asking about Us?,” *Ensign*, November 1998, 71.
11. Moses 3:17.
12. Moroni 10:32.
13. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 211.
14. Isaiah 1:18.
15. Jeremiah 31:34.
16. D&C 1:30.
17. Alma 37:35.
18. See 3 Nephi 18:19–20.
19. Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Voluntaries,” in *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Wm. H. Wise, 1929), 895.