

for the examples of many of you who have gone the extra mile until you have found that which was lost.

Your efforts will have an eternal effect on the lives of your quorum members and their posterity for generations to come. They will be living testimonies of the promise given by the Savior when He said: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, . . . and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:2, 4), “that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” (D&C 15:6), and “how great will be your joy” (D&C 18:16).

Elder Earl C. Tingey

Things as they really are

My dear brethren of the priesthood, how honored I am to be with you this evening. Four of my grandsons are in the Conference Center tonight—Craig, Brent, Kendall, and Michael. I would like to speak to them and all Aaronic Priesthood bearers and invite others to listen.

In a message from the First Presidency, included in the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, we read:

“Our beloved young men . . . , we have great confidence in you. You are choice spirits who have come forth in this day when the responsibilities and opportunities, as well as the temptations, are the greatest. You are at the beginning of your journey through this mortal life. Your Heavenly Father wants your life to be joyful and to lead you back into His presence. The decisions you make now will determine much of what will follow during your life and throughout eternity.”¹

You live in a world of great uncertainty. There are many voices. There are many paths. Not all lead to our Heavenly Father. How will you know to whom to listen or where to go?

Strengthen those who are weak

May each quorum and each one of us individually, working in conjunction with the councils of the Church, follow the example of our Lord and Savior to “take . . . him that is weak, . . . that he may become strong also” (D&C 84:106).

I bear humble witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is scripture, that President Gordon B. Hinckley is indeed a prophet of God, that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer and the Good Shepherd, and that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The prophet Jacob answered these questions in the following scripture: “The Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be.”²

But what are “things as they really are” as referred to by Jacob? Elder Neal A. Maxwell, addressing this subject, has said:

“Without the obedient response to ‘things as they really are,’ there are the endless detours and the empty searches for another course of life. . . . A course of life that is wrong now cannot and will not be proven right later on.”

“The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ gives us many truths . . . —that there really is the living God; there really is the living Church; there really are living prophets; there really are living scriptures; and there really will be a resurrection with a judgment.”³

Standards and truths

There are certain truths, certain “things as they really are,” that are enforced by standards—many of which can be mea-

sured. Let's look at several examples in athletics.

The cover of the March 2004 *New Era* shows a picture of Moroni Rubio of Mexico. Two years ago, at age 16, he took first place at the Central American Junior Championships in the 100-meter sprint. His current best time is 10.46 seconds.⁴ He would be timed by a stopwatch, which measures performance.

The men's world record for high jump is held by a Cuban athlete who jumped approximately 8 feet (2.4 m). Can you imagine jumping that high? High jumpers leap over a horizontal bar resting on two vertical poles. This bar represents a standard, a measure to meet or exceed.

Imagine holding a track meet where the runners are not measured by a stopwatch or where the high jumpers do not have a horizontal bar to measure their jumps.

In life, as in athletics, there are standards, or measured behavior. There are rights and wrongs. As priesthood holders, we do not high jump without a horizontal bar.

Unfortunately we are seeing the removal of traditional standards of morality and behavior in today's world. The vernacular of today is "anything goes." The world views time-honored standards as old-fashioned or out-of-date.

We belong to a church where adhering to standards is expected. Things that have always been wrong in the past are still wrong today. The Church does not modify standards of morality by adapting to changing customs or to the mores of the societies in which we live.

President Gordon B. Hinckley tells of an experience he had as a boy lying in the bed of an old farm wagon at night with his brother Sherman. They "looked at the myriads of stars in the heavens, and took turns picking out familiar stars and tracing the Big Dipper, the handle and the cup, to find the North Star." President Hinckley said he was fascinated by the North Star.

Regardless of the earth's rotation, the North Star maintained its position in the heavens and never moved. He said: "I recognized it as a constant in the midst of change. It was something that could always be counted on, something that was dependable, an anchor in what otherwise appeared to be a moving and unstable firmament."⁵

Noting the unwavering, absolute position of the North Star, one writer told the contrasting story of a young boy who became lost on a camping trip. When his father finally found him, his father asked if he had remembered to pick out something in the landscape that he could always see. This, his father said, would have helped him to fix a steady position. The boy said, "I did."

"What was it?" the father asked.

"That rabbit over there," the boy said.⁶

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, fix your gaze on the unchanging standards of the gospel and not on the moving rabbit.

Standards in *For the Strength of Youth*

In the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, the following standards, among others, are like a North Star to you: choose friends with high standards, do not disfigure your body with tattoos or body piercings, avoid pornography, do not listen to music that contains offensive language, do not use profanity, date only those who have high standards, remain sexually pure, repent as necessary, be honest, keep the Sabbath day holy, pay tithing, and keep the Word of Wisdom.⁷

A dozen years ago, in one of the countries of Africa, we had faithful members of the Church who had been meeting in their homes for several years. I went to that country to see if we could receive permission from the government to bring in missionaries and establish the Church. I met with a high-ranking government minister. He gave me 20 minutes to explain our position.

When I finished he said, “I do not see where anything you have told me is any different from what is currently available in our country. I see no reason to approve your request to bring missionaries into our country.”

He stood up to usher me out of his office. I was panic-stricken. I had failed. In a moment our meeting would be over. What could I do? I offered a silent prayer.

Then I had an inspired thought. I said to the minister, “Sir, if you will give me five more minutes, I would like to share one other thought with you. Then I will leave.” He kindly consented.

I reached for my wallet and removed this small *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, which I have always carried.

I said, “This is a little booklet of standards we give to all of the youth in our Church.”

I then read some of the standards I have mentioned tonight. When I finished he said, “You mean to tell me you expect the youth of your church to live these standards?”

“Yes,” I replied, “and they do.”

“That is amazing,” he said. “Could you send me some of these booklets so that I could distribute them to the youth of my church?”

I replied, “Yes,” and I did.

Several months later we received official approval from the government of that country to come and establish the Church.

Standards are for your eternal security

Young men, these standards you are privileged to keep are truly a pearl of great price. The world does not understand them. Many good people seek them. You have them.

The Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that establishes how we may know today which voices to listen to—what standards to follow. In this revelation, our time, or generation, was referred to as a time when men would “see an over-

flowing scourge” and “a desolating sickness [would] cover the land.”⁸

The Lord then gave the standard of safety that will protect faithful followers. He said, “But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved.”⁹

The Brethren of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are disciples who stand in holy places. They are not moved or swayed by changing times from what has been established as true in all prior generations. The standards of the Church are firm and true. They are for your safety and eternal security. When you commit to live them, you are measured against time-proven standards that are approved by God.

Now, my grandsons and dear brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, you are in a race for life. It is not a brief sprint. It is more like a marathon.

You will be tested and proven against God’s established standards. You will be guided by the Spirit to help you know what to do.

We are almost the only organization left that has established, time-honored standards. Most others have succumbed to the culture of our world. How blessed we are to have living prophets.

May you be blessed as you keep the standards of the Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001), 2.
2. Jacob 4:13.
3. *Things as They Really Are* (1978), xii, xi.
4. See Adam C. Olson, “Moroni’s Feet,” *New Era*, Mar. 2004, 20–23.
5. See Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1996), 5–6.
6. See Jerry Johnston, “Following True North Is Lifelong Challenge,” *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 14, 2004, E1.
7. See *For the Strength of Youth*, 12–37.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 45:31.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.

President Faust

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the choir and congregation will then sing “Praise to the

Man.” At the conclusion of the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

President James E. Faust

Choices determine our happiness

My beloved brethren of the holy priesthood of God all over the world, I greet each of you in the spirit of love and fellowship.

In this life we have to make many choices. Some are very important choices. Some are not. Many of our choices are between good and evil. The choices we make, however, determine to a large extent our happiness or our unhappiness, because we have to live with the consequences of our choices. Making perfect choices all of the time is not possible. It just doesn’t happen. But it is possible to make good choices we can live with and grow from. When God’s children live worthy of divine guidance, they can become “free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon.”¹

A young man yields to peer pressure

Sometimes we make poor choices when we yield to peer pressure. Kieth Merrill had such an experience when he was a young man. He and his friends were diving from sheer rock walls at the East Canyon Reservoir, northeast of Salt Lake City. It inevitably turned into a teenage contest when one young man climbed up to the top of the dam and dived 50 feet into the deep water of the reservoir. The rest of the young men all went to the top of the dam and made the same high dive. One boy wasn’t satisfied with that, so he said, “All right, I’ll do one better!” He climbed 60 feet up the side of the cliff. Not

wanting to be outdone, Kieth climbed up beside him. After the other boy had dived into the water and seemed to be all right, Kieth took courage and made his dive. The contest was now down to these two boys. Kieth’s friend then climbed up to 70 feet and dived. He came up from the water laughing, rubbing his shoulders and his eyes. He then challenged Kieth, “Well, are you going to do it?”

“Of course I’m going to do it!” And everybody on the shore said, “Of course he’s going to do it!”

So Kieth swam back to the shore and climbed up the rocks. He knew if he jumped from the same height of 70 feet that his friend would want to go higher, so he scrambled up 80 feet to the very top of the cliff. No one could go any higher than the top. As Kieth looked down, he was terrified to see the water so very far away. He had made a rash decision. It was not what he wanted to do nor what he felt was right. Instead he had based his decision on the prodding and dares of a half dozen young men whose names he cannot now even remember.

He backed up and ran as hard as he could toward the edge. He found the mark he had carefully laid at the edge of the rock and sprang out into space. On the way down he remembered his parents teaching him to be careful when making decisions because a wrong one could kill him. And now he thought, “You have done it, because when you hit the water you’ll be going so fast that it might as well be concrete.” When he hit the water, it even felt like concrete. How grateful he was when his head finally popped above water.