

8. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, section 85, stanza 5, line 4.
9. John 11:43.
10. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.
12. “Lycidas,” line 125.
13. Ezekiel 34:2–3.
14. See James 1:22.
15. Matthew 4:19.

President Hinckley

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30

to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will follow immediately.

We express appreciation to the men of the Tabernacle Choir and the orchestra for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the session will conclude with the choir singing “The Spirit of God.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brethren, it is good to be with you in this very large priesthood meeting. I suppose this is the largest such gathering of priesthood ever assembled. What a contrast with the occasion described by Wilford Woodruff when all of the priesthood in all the world assembled in one room in Kirtland, Ohio, to receive instruction from the Prophet Joseph.

We have heard excellent counsel tonight, and I commend it to you.

The raging storm of pornography

As I offer concluding remarks I rather reluctantly speak to a theme that I have dealt with before. I do it in the spirit of the words of Alma, who said, “This is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance” (Alma 29:9).

It is in that spirit that I speak to you tonight. What I have to say is not new. I have spoken on it before. The September issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines carry a talk I gave some years ago on the same subject. Brother Oaks has touched on it tonight.

While the matter of which I speak was a problem then, it is a much more serious

problem now. It grows increasingly worse. It is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful. I speak of pornography in all of its manifestations. I do so because of letters that come to me from broken-hearted wives.

Pornography strangles a marriage

I should like to read portions of one received only a few days ago. I do so with the consent of the writer. I have deleted anything that might lead to disclosure of the parties concerned. I have exercised limited editorial liberty in the interest of clarity and flow of language. I quote now:

“Dear President Hinckley,

“My husband of 35 years died recently. . . . He had visited with our good bishop as quickly as he could after his most recent surgery. Then he came to me on that same evening to tell me he had been addicted to pornography. He needed me to forgive him [before he died]. He further said that he had grown tired of living a double life. [He had served in many important] Church callings while knowing [at the same time] that he was in the grips of this ‘other master.’

“I was stunned, hurt, felt betrayed and violated. I could not promise him forgiveness at that moment but pleaded for time. . . . I was able to review my married life [and see how] pornography had . . . put a stranglehold on our marriage from early on. We had only been married a couple of months when he brought home a [pornographic] magazine. I locked him out of the car because I was so hurt and angry. . . .

“For many years in our marriage . . . he was most cruel in many of his demands. I was never good enough for him. . . . I felt incredibly beaten down at that time to a point of deep depression. . . . I know now that I was being compared to the latest ‘porn queen.’ . . .

“We went to counseling one time and . . . my husband proceeded to rip me apart with his criticism and disdain of me. . . .

“I could not even get into the car with him after that but walked around the town . . . for hours, contemplating suicide. [I thought,] ‘Why go on if this is all that my “eternal companion” feels for me?’

“I did go on, but zipped a protective shield around myself. I existed for other reasons than my husband and found joy in my children, in projects and accomplishments that I could do totally on my own. . . .

“After his ‘deathbed confession’ and [after taking time] to search through my life, I [said] to him, ‘Don’t you know what you have done?’ . . . I told him that I had brought a pure heart into our marriage, kept it pure during that marriage, and intended to keep it pure ever after. Why could he not do the same for me? All I ever wanted was to feel cherished and treated with the smallest of pleasantries . . . instead of being treated like some kind of chattel. . . .

“I am now left to grieve not only for his being gone but also for a relationship that could have been [beautiful, but was not]. . . .

“Please warn the brethren (and sisters). Pornography is not some titillating

feast for the eyes that gives a momentary rush of excitement. [Rather] it has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships that should be sacred, hurting to the very core those you should love the most.”

And she signs the letter.

What a pathetic and tragic story. I have omitted some of the detail but have read enough that you can sense her depth of feeling. And what of her husband? He has died a painful death from cancer, his final words a confession of a life laced with sin.

And sin it is. It is devilish. It is totally inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, with personal testimony of the things of God, and with the life of one who has been ordained to the holy priesthood.

Prevalence, destructiveness of the material

This is not the only letter I have received. There have been enough that I am convinced this is a very serious problem even among us. It arises from many sources and expresses itself in a variety of ways. Now it is compounded by the Internet. That Internet is available not only to adults but also to young people.

I recently read that pornography has become a \$57 billion industry worldwide. Twelve billion of this is derived in the United States by evil and “conspiring men” (see D&C 89:4) who seek riches at the expense of the gullible. It is reported that it produces more revenue in the United States than the “combined revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises or the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC” (“Internet Pornography Statistics: 2003,” Internet, <http://www.healthymind.com/s-port-stats.html>).

It robs the workplace of the time and talents of employees. “20% of men admit accessing pornography at work. 13% of women [do so]. . . . 10% of adults admit having internet sexual addiction” (“Inter-

net Pornography Statistics: 2003”). That is their admission, but actually the number may be much higher.

The National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families states that “approximately 40 million people in the United States are sexually involved with the Internet. . . .

“One in five children ages 10–17 [has] received a sexual solicitation over the Internet. . . .

“Three million of the visitors to adult websites in September 2000 were age 17 or younger. . . .

“Sex is the number 1 topic searched on the Internet” (NCPCF Online, “Current Statistics,” Internet, <http://www.nationalcoalition.org/resourcesservices/stat.html>).

I might go on, but you too know enough of the seriousness of the problem. Suffice it to say that all who are involved become victims. Children are exploited, and their lives are severely damaged. The minds of youth become warped with false concepts. Continued exposure leads to addiction that is almost impossible to break. Men, so very many, find they cannot leave it alone. Their energies and their interests are consumed in their dead-end pursuit of this raw and sleazy fare.

Seek the shelter of the gospel

The excuse is given that it is hard to avoid, that it is right at our fingertips and there is no escape.

Suppose a storm is raging and the winds howl and the snow swirls about you. You find yourself unable to stop it. But you can dress properly and seek shelter, and the storm will have no effect upon you.

Likewise, even though the Internet is saturated with sleazy material, you do not have to watch it. You can retreat to the shelter of the gospel and its teaching of cleanliness and virtue and purity of life.

I know that I am speaking directly and plainly. I do so because the Internet has made pornography more widely accessible, adding to what is available on DVDs and videos, on television and magazine stands. It leads to fantasies that are destructive of self-respect. It leads to illicit relationships, often to disease, and to abusive criminal activity.

Stand above this evil thing

Brethren, we can do better than this. When the Savior taught the multitude, He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

Could anyone wish for a greater blessing than this? The high road of decency, of self-discipline, of wholesome living is the road for men, both young and old, who hold the priesthood of God. To the young men I put this question: Can you imagine John the Baptist, who restored the priesthood which you hold, being engaged in any such practice as this? To you men: Can you imagine Peter, James, and John, Apostles of our Lord, engaging in such? No, of course not.

Now brethren, the time has come for any one of us who is so involved to pull himself out of the mire, to stand above this evil thing, to “look to God and live” (Alma 37:47). We do not have to view salacious magazines. We do not have to read books laden with smut. We do not have to watch television that is beneath wholesome standards. We do not have to rent movies that depict that which is filthy. We do not have to sit at the computer and play with pornographic material found on the Internet.

I repeat, we can do better than this. We must do better than this. We are men of the priesthood. This is a most sacred and marvelous gift, worth more than all the dross of the world. But it will be amen to the effectiveness of that priesthood for anyone who engages in the practice of seeking out pornographic material.

Overcoming this enslaving addiction

If there be any within the sound of my voice who are doing so, then may you plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals.

Let any who may be in the grip of this vice get upon their knees in the privacy of their closet and plead with the Lord for help to free them from this evil monster. Otherwise this vicious stain will continue through life and even into eternity. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, taught, “And it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, inasmuch as they have become immortal, . . . they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still” (2 Nephi 9:15–16).

President Joseph F. Smith, in his vision of the Savior’s visit among the spirits of the dead, saw that “unto the wicked he did not go, and among the ungodly and the unrepentant who had defiled themselves while in the flesh, his voice was not raised” (D&C 138:20).

Walk in virtue to claim greatest promises

Now, my brethren, I do not wish to be negative. I am by nature optimistic. But in such matters as this I am a realist. If we are involved in such behavior, now is the time to change. Let this be our hour of resolution. Let us turn about to a better way. Said the Lord:

“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).

How could any man wish for more? These supernal blessings are promised to those who walk in virtue before the Lord and before all men.

How wonderful are the ways of our Lord. How glorious His promises. When tempted we can substitute for thoughts of evil thoughts of Him and His teachings. He has said:

“And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

“Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you” (D&C 88:67–68).

To you deacons and teachers and priests who are with us tonight, you wonderful young men who have to do with the sacrament, the Lord has said, “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 133:5).

Priesthood power requires righteousness

To all of the priesthood the statement of revelation is clear and unequivocal: “The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . . the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness” (D&C 121:36).

Now I know, my brethren, that most of you are not afflicted with this evil. I ask your pardon for taking your time in dwelling on it. But if you are a stake president or a bishop, a district or branch president, you may very well have to assist those who are affected. May the Lord grant you wisdom, guidance, inspiration, and love for those who so need it.

And to all of you, young or old, who are not involved, I congratulate you and leave my blessing with you. How beautiful is the life that is patterned after the teachings of the gospel of Him who was without sin. Such a man walks with unblemished brow in the sunlight of virtue and strength.

May heaven's blessings attend you, my dear brethren. May all of us reach out

to any who need help, I pray, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "The Spirit of God."
Elder Merrill C. Oaks offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 3, 2004. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang "Glory to God on High." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning to this, the fourth general session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are here with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Glory to God on High" and will

now favor us with "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare." The invocation will then be offered by Elder E. Ray Bateman of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare."
Elder E. Ray Bateman offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Love Is Spoken Here." We shall then be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, who was sustained yesterday as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve.

The choir and congregation will then sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, we will be pleased to hear from Elder David A. Bednar, who also was sustained yesterday as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. We shall then hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir sang "Love Is Spoken Here."
