



## For the Strength of Parents

*Helping Teens Follow  
Prophets:  
Modesty*

## Immodesty Leads to Immorality

“I am positive that the clothes we wear can be a tremendous factor in the gradual breakdown of our love of virtue, our steadfastness in chastity” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 168).



## Doctrine & Covenants 1:14-16

14 And the **arm** of the Lord shall be revealed; and the **day** cometh that they who will not **hear** the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his **servants**, neither give **heed** to the words of the prophets and **apostles**, shall be **cut** off from among the people;

15 For they have **strayed** from mine **ordinances**, and have **broken** mine **everlasting** covenant;

16 They **seek** not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man **walketh** in his **own way**, and after the **image** of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth **old** and shall perish in Babylon, even **Babylon** the great, which shall fall.

## Alma 35:15

15 Now Alma, being **grieved** for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds, and the contentions which were among them; and having been to declare the word, or sent to declare the word, among all the people in every city; and seeing that the hearts of the people began to wax hard, and that they began to be **offended** because of the strictness of the word, his heart was exceedingly **sorrowful**.

## Warnings from Prophets

“There are those who criticize when we issue a statement of counsel or warning. Please know that our pleadings are not motivated by any selfish desire. Please know that our warnings are not without substance and reason. Please know that the decisions to speak out on various matters are not reached without deliberation, discussion, and prayer. Please know that our only ambition is to help each of you with your problems, your struggles, your families, your lives” (President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 59).

## From Lorenzo Snow



“No man can be more happy than by obeying the living prophet’s counsel. You may go from east to west, from north to south, and tread this footstool of the Lord all over, and you cannot find a man that can make himself happy in this Church, only by applying the counsel of the living prophet in this life; it is a matter of impossibility for a man to receive a fulness who is not susceptible of receiving and carrying out the living prophet’s counsel. An individual that applies the counsel for this Church is bound to increase in all that is good, for there is a fountain of counsel which the Lord has established. He has made it, has deposited that counsel, that wisdom and those riches, and it will circumscribe all that pertains unto good, unto salvation; all things that pertain to glory and to the exaltation of the Saints in this world and in the world to come” (Lorenzo Snow, *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, 86-87; emphasis added).

## Doctrinal Foundations

- 2 Nephi 26:3-9
- 3 Nephi 10:12-13
- Helaman 13:22-24, 33

• **“There are some of our members who practice selective obedience.** A prophet is not one who displays a smorgasbord of truth from which we are free to pick and choose. However, some members become critical and suggest the prophet should change the menu. **A prophet doesn’t take a poll to which way the wind of public opinion is blowing.** He reveals the will of the Lord to us” (Glenn L. Pace, *Ensign*, May, 1989, 26).



## Modesty, Dress & Appearance

“Your body is God’s sacred creation. Respect it as a gift from God, and do not defile it in any way. Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. You can show that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.

**“Prophets of God have always counseled His children to dress modestly. The way you dress is a reflection of what you are on the inside. Your dress and grooming send messages about you to others and influence the way you and others act. When you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and can exercise a good influence on those around you.**

“Never lower your dress standards for any occasion. Doing so sends the message that you are using your body to get attention and approval and that modesty is important only when it is convenient (*For the Strength of Youth*, 14-15; emphasis added).

## Modesty: Humility, Decency, and Propriety



1 Corinthians 3:16-17

“Modesty in dress is a quality of mind and heart, born of respect for oneself, one’s fellowmen, and the Creator of us all. Modesty reflects an attitude of humility, decency and propriety.” (*Priesthood Bulletin*, September 1970, 2.)

## Immodesty Damaging to our Souls



“As I walk along the streets on my way to or from the Church Office Building, I see both young and older women, many of them ‘daughters of Zion,’ who are immodestly dressed. ... The wearing of immodest clothing, which may seem like a small matter, takes something away from our young women or young men in the Church. It simply makes it more difficult to keep those eternal principles by which we will have to live if we are to return to the presence of our Father in heaven.” (*New Era*, January 1971, 5.)

## Modesty & Reverence

“Some Latter-day Saints may feel that modesty is a tradition of the Church or that it has evolved from conservative, puritanical behavior. Modesty is not just cultural. Modesty is a gospel principle that applies to people of all cultures and ages. In fact, modesty is fundamental to being worthy of the Spirit. To be modest is to be humble, and being humble invites the Spirit to be with us. In everyday living, immodest clothing such as short shorts, miniskirts, tight clothing, shirts that do not cover the stomach, and other revealing attire are not appropriate. Men and women—including young men and young women—should wear clothing that covers the shoulder and avoid clothing that is low cut in the front or back or revealing in any other manner. Tight pants, tight shirts, excessively baggy clothing, wrinkled apparel, and unkempt hair are not appropriate. All should avoid extremes in clothing, hairstyle, and other aspects of appearance. We should always be neat and clean, avoiding sloppiness or inappropriate casualness.

“Modesty is at the center of being pure and chaste, both in thought and deed. Thus, because it guides and influences our thoughts, behavior, and decisions, modesty is at the core of our character. Our clothing is more than just covering for our bodies; it reflects who we are and what we want to be, both here in mortality and in the eternities that will follow” (Robert D. Hales, “Modesty: Reverence for the Lord,” *Ensign*, Aug 2008, 34-39)

## Our Clothing Represents Who We Are

“Imagine that you are watching a play. An actor comes on stage dressed as a clown but starts playing the serious part of the lead. You might react by thinking that this is inappropriate—there must be some mistake in the costuming or casting.

“Now think of how inappropriate it is to go out into the world or come to church dressed in clothes that do not represent who you really are in spirit. Our outward appearance and behavior give a message. What message are we sending? Does it reflect that we are children of God? When we go to church or the temple, it is important that we dress to demonstrate that we are prepared to worship and to indicate that we are mentally and spiritually ready to invite the Spirit to be with us always.

“Years ago, as a father and bishop in the Church, I could not understand the rationale of youth who dressed in wild colors and provocative fashions to show their “in your face” independence from modest, conservative dress codes and traditions. Then I would observe that, ironically, the rigid compliance of these youth to their bizarre dress codes required far greater obedience and conformity to peer-group pressures than that desired by society as a whole.

### Immodesty = Loss of the Spirit

**“When we dress for attention, we are not inviting the Spirit to be with us.** We act differently when we are dressed for the world’s attention. Moreover, what we wear will influence the behavior of others toward us.

“Consider why missionaries dress conservatively in a skirt and blouse or in a suit with a white shirt and tie. How might someone respond if the missionary had unkempt hair and if he or she were dressed in blue jeans, flip-flops, and a T-shirt with a tawdry printed message? That person might ask, “Is this a representative of God?” Why would that person want to engage in a serious conversation about the purpose of life or the Restoration of the gospel with such a missionary?

### How We Feel on the Inside

“Of course we don’t need to dress like missionaries all of the time. There are certainly times when modest casual clothing is appropriate. The point is this: How we dress affects how people react to us. It also demonstrates where our heart and spirit really desire to be.

“How we feel on the inside shows on the outside. We show love and respect for ourselves and others by our attitude, speech, and dress. We show love and respect for Church leaders and ward or branch members by speaking, dressing, and behaving in a manner that does not bring inappropriate attention to ourselves. We show love and respect for friends and associates when our language, dress, and behavior are not provocative or unduly casual. And we show love and respect to the Lord through humble dress and behavior. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” ([John 13:35](#))” (Robert D. Hales, “Modesty: Reverence for the Lord,” *Ensign*, Aug 2008, 34–39).

### What Is Immodest?

“Immodest clothing includes short shorts and skirts, tight clothing, shirts that do not cover the stomach, and other revealing attire. Young women should wear clothing that covers the shoulder and avoid clothing that is low-cut in the front or the back or revealing in any other manner. Young men should also maintain modesty in their appearance. All should avoid extremes in clothing, appearance, and hairstyle. Always be neat and clean and avoid being sloppy or inappropriately casual in dress, grooming, and manners. Ask yourself, “Would I feel comfortable with my appearance if I were in the Lord’s presence?”

“Someday you will receive your endowment in the temple. Your dress and behavior should help you prepare for that sacred time.

“Do not disfigure yourself with tattoos or body piercings. If girls or women desire to have their ears pierced, they are encouraged to wear only one pair of modest earrings. (*For the Strength of Youth*, 15-16; emphasis added).

### Not To Be Influenced By the World

“For you to fully claim Heavenly Father’s blessings and protection, we ask you to stay true to the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ and *not* slavishly follow the whims of fads and fashions. The Church will never deny your moral agency regarding what you should wear and exactly how you should look. But the Church will always declare standards and will always teach principles. As Sister Susan Tanner taught this morning, one of those principles is modesty. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, modesty in appearance is *always* in fashion. Our standards are *not* socially negotiable.

### Not to Be Influence By the World

“The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet is very clear in its call for young women to avoid clothing that is too tight, too short, or improperly revealing in any manner, including bare midriffs. Parents, please review this booklet with your children. Second only to your love, they need your limits. Young women, choose your clothing the way you would choose your friends—in both cases choose that which improves you and would give you confidence standing in the presence of God. Good friends would never embarrass you, demean you, or exploit you. Neither should your clothing.

### Not to Be Influenced By the World

“I make a special appeal regarding how young women might dress for Church services and Sabbath worship. We used to speak of “best dress” or “Sunday dress,” and maybe we should do so again. In any case, from ancient times to modern we have always been invited to present our best selves inside and out when entering the house of the Lord—and a dedicated LDS chapel is a “house of the Lord.” Our clothing or footwear need never be expensive, indeed should *not* be expensive, but neither should it appear that we are on our way to the beach. When we come to worship the God and Father of us all and to partake of the sacrament symbolizing the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we should be as comely and respectful, as dignified and appropriate as we can be. We should be recognizable in appearance as well as in behavior that we truly are disciples of Christ, that in a spirit of worship we are meek and lowly of heart, that we truly desire the Savior’s Spirit to be with us always” (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “To Young Women, *General Conference*, October 2005, Internet Transcript, <http://lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,23-1-559-9,00.html>).

## Two Notches Above

“Recognize that as the world becomes more and more wicked, you will need to become more different from the world. The standards of Jesus Christ have always been demanding. Hold fast to them. Don’t look to just be one or two notches better than the world. If we content ourselves with simply not being as bad as Babylon, we’ll soon find out that we’re on the same slippery slope downward, just a few seconds behind” (David E. Sorenson, “Put Away Childish Things,” *BYU Speeches*, 20 May 2003).

## Role of Parents in Teaching Modesty

“We can set a family standard by always dressing ourselves modestly, appropriately, and tastefully. If we are endowed, we should always wear our temple garments and treat them with respect and reverence. When we as parents and leaders are consistent with what we *teach* and what we *do*, we avoid the confusion we may otherwise cause.

“Family home evening lessons and personal interviews provide formal opportunities to teach children about modesty. Informal teaching is just as important and can be very effective. It might happen unexpectedly during meals, on the way to school, during a walk, or on a shopping trip. Take advantage of these opportunities, and do not shy away from giving straight answers. If you do shy away, your children might go to other sources for information—some of which may not be in harmony with gospel standards.

## Important Concepts to Teach Regarding Modesty

- You are a child of God.
- Your body is a temple. It is a gift from God.
- Modesty in dress, thought, attitude, and behavior invites the companionship of the Holy Ghost and reflects your personal commitment to the gospel.
- The way you dress and behave sends messages to others about your attitudes and how you feel about yourself.
- You can be attractive without being immodest.
- Part of Heavenly Father’s plan is the attraction that occurs between males and females. These biological inclinations must be controlled.
- As parents, we need to speak frankly about these natural tendencies but also about the importance and value of self-discipline that Heavenly Father requires us to learn as we overcome the “natural man” (see [Mosesiah 3:19](#)). In this case, that refers to dressing and acting in a modest manner.
- Girls might not recognize that the physical display they create when they dress immodestly affects boys more than it does them. Help children, especially daughters, understand that attracting someone of the opposite sex solely by physical means does not create a lasting relationship” (Silvia H. Allred, “Teaching Modesty to Our Children,” *Ensign*, July 2009, 33).

## Passing the Real Test

“Conformity to dress and grooming standards is one of the tests the Lord imposes upon us to see if we will take counsel and to see if we can stand up against the pressures of the world. There is, of course, an underlying reason for all the counsels and commands relayed from the Lord by the Brethren to the Saints.

## Passing the Real Test (Cont.)

“Immodesty, for instance, leads to immorality. [Tight fitting clothing] and grubby grooming open the door to rebellion against the established order and to associations which lead away from the Church. Surely those who are so adorned are not living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. But even if we are not sufficiently in tune to recognize the valid reasons behind the dress and grooming standards, we are still expected to abide by them.

## Passing the Real Test (Cont.)

“We might well hark back to the counsel given Adam to offer sacrifices. He, not knowing the underlying reasons, did so in order to conform to the counsel that the Lord gave. And in due course the angel from heaven explained what was involved” (Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *The Ten Commandments of a Peculiar People, Brigham Young University Speeches*, 28 January 1975, 4-5).

## It's Time for Some Retrenching

When President Brigham Young (1801–77) became concerned that his own daughters were becoming too worldly, he said, "I am weary of the manner in which our [young] women seek to outdo each other in all the foolish fashions of the world." Then he asked them to "retrench," to remove worldliness from their dress and behavior. "I desire them to retrench from their extravagance in dress. ... Retrench in everything that is bad and worthless, and improve in everything that is good and beautiful. Not to make yourselves unhappy, but to live so that you may be truly happy in this life and the life to come" (Quoted in Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association* (1911), 8–10).



## A Style of Our Own

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) encouraged us to create a culture of modesty different from the one that may exist outside of our homes: "We can create a style of our own. ... *We must be different.* We need not do anything we do not wish to do. We can create our own style and standards. We can influence the patterns among our own people, and we can also help to develop proper community patterns" (Quoted in "On My Honor," *Ensign*, Apr. 1979, 3).



## We All Need to Repent

How can we follow the Prophet if we do not know what he has said?

How can we follow the Prophet if we do not read what he has written?

How can we follow the prophet if we do not do what he does?

## From Brigham Young

"The Lord through His prophet will keep us informed. The question is, Are we listening? The story is told that Brigham Young, after having urged the people in certain communities to clean up their properties, refused to go back to preach to them, saying something along these lines: 'You didn't listen to me last time when I urged you to fix up your premises. The same doors are off their hinges; the same barns are still unpainted; the same fences are partly fallen. I will return when you are ready for the next sermon but you haven't done anything about the first one yet' (See 1978 Devotional Speeches of the Year, 136)" (Sheri Dew, *No Doubt About It* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001], 174).

