

# *A Banquet of Consequences: The Cumulative Result of All Choices*

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One of the most cunning aspects of the adversary's efforts to thwart our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness is his deceitful teaching that there is no evil influence or devil<sup>1</sup> and his attempt to redefine evil as good and good as evil, darkness as light and light as darkness, and bitter as sweet and sweet as bitter!<sup>2</sup>

This is sometimes called a paradigm shift—or “when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is replaced by a new and different way,”<sup>3</sup> thus portraying things to be exactly the opposite of what they really are. In his classic novel *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis wrote from a senior devil's point of view. Lewis inverted traditional values using irony and satire to make evil appear good and good appear evil.<sup>4</sup>

In this vein I had a provocative meeting with an internationally recognized advertising expert a few months ago. He is an unusually gifted and creative thinker. We were discussing the influence of evil and the consequences of bad choices.

He envisioned an interesting hypothetical account of the adversary (Lucifer) meeting with an advertising agency. The adversary described his dilemma: He and his followers had rebelled and rejected the Father's plan and had come to understand they could not prevail against God. Lucifer

understood that while the Father's plan was about joy and happiness, his own plan was resulting in grief and misery. The problem, Lucifer explained to the ad executive, was how to attract followers.

After contemplating this problem, it was determined that Lucifer's only hope of success was to achieve a paradigm shift or values inversion—in other words, to characterize the Father's plan as resulting in grief and misery and Lucifer's plan as resulting in joy and happiness.

While this contemplated meeting with an advertising agency is hypothetical, it serves a useful purpose. The truth is, not only do the enemies of Father's plan attempt to undermine the doctrine and principles of the plan, but they also attempt to mischaracterize the blessings that flow from the plan. Their basic effort is to make that which is good, righteous, and joyful seem utterly miserable.

I will discuss some of the adversary's efforts to mischaracterize and undermine the blessings of living according to the Father's plan.

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### Word of Wisdom

My first example is the Word of Wisdom. I fully recognize that you magnificent students understand the importance of the Word of Wisdom and have agreed, on your honor, to live by it. However, over the course of a lifetime I have seen many of my friends' lives blighted and sometimes destroyed by alcohol. An alcohol culture isn't just about Church doctrine; it is about the health and happiness of everyone. You can be an important voice in educating society about the consequences of this issue.

In the Father's plan, the Word of Wisdom—section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, given because of “evils and designs . . . of conspiring men”—provides health principles. It is “adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints.” It sets forth particulars, including that “wine or strong drink [i.e., alcohol] . . . is not good.” Tobacco and hot drinks (i.e., tea and coffee) are “not for the body.”<sup>5</sup> This revelation also advocates wholesome health practices with a promise. It promises those acting in obedience to the divine command great physical and spiritual rewards.<sup>6</sup> They “shall receive health . . . and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge.”<sup>7</sup>

The distortion—paradigm shift—that the adversary utilizes is clearly illustrated by his advocacy for tobacco and alcohol.

Even the hypothetical advertising agency would have a hard time casting tobacco in a favorable light today. The Word of Wisdom revelation was received in 1833. In 1921 President Heber J. Grant, inspired by the Lord, called on all Saints to more fully live the Word of Wisdom. At the time, mass marketing and glamorization in the movies made cigarette smoking appear fashionable, sophisticated, and fun. It wasn't until 1964, forty-three years later, that the surgeon general of the United States concluded, “Cigarette smoking is a health hazard of sufficient importance in the United States to warrant appropriate remedial action.”<sup>8</sup>

The statistics today with respect to cigarette smoking are not in dispute. Smokers are more

likely than nonsmokers to develop heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer. It is estimated to increase the risk of lung cancer by twenty-five times.<sup>9</sup>

So what the adversary portrayed as fashionable, sophisticated, and fun has in fact resulted in misery and untimely death for millions of people.

Alcohol is another example. Think again of the adversary's campaign and of how BYU's Honor Code has been portrayed. We are all pleased that BYU consistently rates as the highest “stone cold sober school.” The word *stone* as an adverb can mean “entirely, utterly.”<sup>10</sup> *Cold* as an adverb can mean “with utter finality: absolutely, completely.”<sup>11</sup> *Sober* can be defined as alcoholic abstinence.

Some other schools are identified as “party schools,” which is understood to mean they have alcohol parties. *Party* is defined as “a gathering for social entertainment, or the entertainment itself.”<sup>12</sup>

To the average young person looking for higher education—particularly those not of our faith—“stone cold sober” might sound like misery, and “party” might sound like having fun and being joyful.

Over many years I have followed a research project that commenced in the 1940s. Initially there were 268 men attending Harvard University who were periodically studied over their entire lives. Later, others, including women, became part of the study. The goal of the original study was to find out about success and happiness. The study showed that college entrance scores and grade averages did not predict either success or happiness in later life.

This study contains three significant insights for me. First, adult happiness has a high correlation with childhood family happiness, especially love and affection from parents.<sup>13</sup> Second is the importance of a healthy, stable marriage to lifelong happiness.<sup>14</sup> Third is the negative effects of alcohol on marital and lifetime success and happiness. Alcohol abuse touches one-third of families and is involved in one-fourth of hospital admissions. It plays a major role in death, bad health, and diminished accomplishment.<sup>15</sup>

In “Wine, Women and Danger,” a recent *Washington Post* front-page article based on U.S. federal health data, it was reported that “women in America are drinking far more, and far more frequently, than their mothers or grandmothers did, and alcohol consumption is killing them in record numbers.” The article concluded with comments by Robert D. Brewer that “the current and emerging science does not support the purported benefits of moderate drinking” and that “the risk of death from cancer appears to go up with any level of alcohol consumption.”<sup>16</sup>

In the last two or three years, many universities across the world have been trying to diminish alcohol use because of its connection to serious antisocial behaviors, including sexual assault and serious health concerns, especially from binge drinking. The terrible impact of alcohol on young brains is now medically established.<sup>17</sup>

In reciting primarily personal health issues, I have not attempted to categorize other serious alcohol impacts such as accidents while driving under the influence, men trying to excuse physical and sexual assaults because of alcohol impairment, and the effects on fetal brains from alcohol use during pregnancy.<sup>18</sup>

As if cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, and an opiate epidemic<sup>19</sup> were not harmful enough to society, we now see the forces of evil pushing legalization of recreational marijuana.

To come back to our advertising analogy, “stone cold sober” is ultimately joy and happiness, and, in many cases, “party”—as in an alcohol party—is ultimately grief and misery.

### Family Choices

Family choices follow a similar pattern. In the Father’s plan, the role of families is clearly set forth. In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” we read:

*The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who*

*honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>20</sup>

It is fairly common in today’s world, in another paradigm shift, to trumpet alternative choices in a positive way that are in direct conflict with this plan and that are unfavorable to marriage and family. Let me mention a few.

- The choice for both women and men to put education and careers ahead of marriage and family.
- The choice to purposefully have no or few children or to terminate pregnancy when it is inconvenient.<sup>21</sup>
- The choice to engage in immoral conduct as a substitute for the sacred institution of marriage.

The adversary has targeted women and has painted motherhood as a dead-end road of drudgery. He has targeted men and has painted fatherhood as unimportant and fidelity as “old-school.” The alienation and objectification of pornography is an example of immoral conduct being substituted for the sacred institution of marriage. It underscores the horrific turning from truth and righteousness that the adversary seeks.

Inappropriate alternative choices are painted as appropriate in helping to achieve the worldly goals of freedom and equality. As a result of such choices, the average number of children a woman will bear in her lifetime is declining dramatically. It is estimated that 46 percent of the world lives in countries in which the fertility rate is below 2.1 children—the rate necessary for the population to remain stable. Most European and Asian countries are below this level. Italy and Japan are both at about 1.3 births. Japan is expected to decrease in population from 120 million to about 100 million by the year 2050.<sup>22</sup>

This worldwide decline in population has been described by some as the “demographic winter.”<sup>23</sup> Many countries are not having enough children to replace the generation that is dying.

Let's see if we can illustrate this problem here in the Marriott Center. Will all of you who are the oldest child in your family please stand and remain standing? In today's world, in many of these countries, but not in the United States, most of the rest of you who are still seated would never have been born.

Thank you. Please be seated.

Now, everybody who is the third or later child in your family, please stand and remain standing. You would not have been born, even in the United States, if the current trends applied. Can you see why they call it the demographic winter?

Thank you. Please be seated.

Let me share one other reality that is of great concern to me. I had a sobering experience in Jerusalem last October. We visited the Children's Memorial, which is part of the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland and I, together with two American Jewish leaders, laid a remembrance wreath. As you move through the Children's Memorial, the first names of the children and their ages at death are announced one after another with a background of music that portrays this terrible atrocity. It is believed that more than one million Jewish children were killed during the Holocaust.<sup>24</sup>

As I experienced the museum, I was overcome with emotion and completely devastated. Standing outside to regain my composure, I reflected on the horror of the experience and suddenly realized that in the United States alone there are as many abortions every two years<sup>25</sup> as the number of Jewish children killed in the Holocaust during the Second World War.

Now, as a lawyer, I am cognizant that the motives and intent of these two tragedies are entirely different. The Jewish children were killed because they were Jews, and there is no analogue to this in all history, but the intensity of my feeling was about the loss of children. Bringing children into the world is a sacred part of our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness. We are so numbed and intimidated by the immensity of the practice of abortion that many of us have pushed it to the

back of our minds and try to keep it out of our consciousness. Clearly the adversary is attacking the value of children on many levels.

Abortion needs to be approached very carefully. This is a problem that will probably not be solved by personal condemnation or judgmental accusations. Some have cautioned to not judge a ship—or men or women—without understanding the length of the voyage and the storms encountered.<sup>26</sup> I might add, many who engage in this deplorable conduct do not have a testimony of the Savior or knowledge of the Father's plan.

However, for those who believe we are accountable to God—and even for many of those not of our faith who are secular but pride themselves on being on the so-called “right side of history”—this has become a tragedy of monumental proportions. When you combine it with the demographic winter that we have just explored, it is a serious moral blot on our society.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught:

*Supreme happiness in marriage is governed considerably by a primary factor—that of the bearing and rearing of children. . . . The Church cannot approve nor condone . . . measures which . . . greatly limit the family.<sup>27</sup>*

With respect to the number and spacing of children, the health of the mother must be considered, and the decision should be made *prayerfully* by husbands and wives.<sup>28</sup> Such decisions should never be judged by outsiders.<sup>29</sup> Some faithful Saints are not able to have children or may not have the opportunity to marry. They will receive every blessing at the ultimate banquet of consequences.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, Lucifer has supported abortion and convinced many people in a horrific paradigm shift that children represent lost opportunity and misery instead of joy and happiness.

As Latter-day Saints, we must be at the forefront of changing hearts and minds on the importance of children. The attacks on the family that I just described ultimately result in grief and misery.

The Lord has declared that His work and His glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>31</sup> The plan is established through families. Every family member is important, and their roles are beautiful, glorious, and fulfilling.

The family proclamation could not be more clear about the consequences of choices inconsistent with the Father’s plan. It unequivocally proclaims:

*We warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.*<sup>32</sup>

This clearly sets forth the ultimate banquet of consequences and the cumulative impact of choices not in accordance with the Father’s plan of happiness.

In all marriages and in raising children there are challenges and sacrifices. But the rewards both in this life and in the eternities are breathtakingly beautiful. They emanate from a loving Father in Heaven.

### **Prospering in the Land**

Most of you are on the verge of that period of life in which financial matters and the choices you make about them are exceedingly important. A familiar scripture found in Alma 36:30—and similarly in many other places in the Book of Mormon—has two parts. It reads, “Inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land.” The second part reads, “Inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence.” It is clear that having the blessing of the Holy Spirit is a principal element of prospering in the land.

Along with having the Spirit, sacred teachings of the Church establish having sufficient for our needs as the best measure of temporal prosperity. Lucifer’s paradigm shift here is to elevate the seeking of great wealth and the acquisition of highly visible luxury products. Some seem absolutely driven to achieve the lifestyle of the rich and

famous. Excess wealth is not promised to faithful members, nor does it usually bring happiness.

As a people, the Latter-day Saints have indeed prospered. Some achieve wealth as the result of very worthwhile and appropriate pursuits and use that wealth to bless mankind and further the Lord’s purposes.

Wise financial principles include seeking the kingdom of God first; working, planning, and spending wisely; planning for the future; and using wealth to build up the kingdom of God.

Many years ago President N. Eldon Tanner gave a classic talk entitled “Constancy Amid Change.” The principles he taught are as applicable today as when he taught them:

First, “pay an honest tithing.”

Second, “live on less than you earn.”

Third, “learn to distinguish between needs and wants.” In doing so, remember that yesterday’s luxuries have in some cases become today’s necessities.

Fourth, “develop and live within a budget” but plan on the unexpected.

Fifth, “be honest in all your financial affairs.”<sup>33</sup>

President Tanner’s admonition to live on less than you earn is a fundamental principle. In its most simple form, this is the principle: If you earn \$100 and you only spend \$95, you will be happy. If you earn \$100 and you spend \$105, this could be a recipe for misery.

### **Lucifer’s Objective Is to Undermine the Father’s Plan**

In addition to portraying blessings as misery, Lucifer’s objective is to undermine the Father’s plan and destroy faith in Jesus Christ and His doctrine. The assault on the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ has never been more pronounced in my lifetime than it is today. As the scriptures predicted, Lucifer is using many devices to accomplish this objective.

As Helaman taught:

*Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.*<sup>34</sup>

It is one thing to be misled by the adversary. It is another to be one of his mercenaries. Elder Neal A. Maxwell, as usual, said it beautifully:

*How tragic it is that so many mortals are mercenaries for the adversary . . . and are . . . bought off at such low prices. A little status, a little money, a little praise, a little fleeting fame, and they are willing to do the bidding of him who can offer all sorts of transitory “rewards,” but who has no celestial currency.*<sup>35</sup>

This echoes the famous words of Alma speaking of Korihor, who had spread the old militant atheist lies and then discovered that “the devil will not support his children at the last day.”<sup>36</sup>

There is probably no better example of the impact of mercenaries than Lehi’s vision of the tree of life and the great and spacious building in the Book of Mormon. There were those in the vision who pointed fingers at those who had grasped the rod of iron and had even partaken of the fruit of the tree. The mocking caused the partakers to be “ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”<sup>37</sup>

Thus, bad choices result in a banquet with bitter, rancid, nasty, and miserable results.

Compare this to the glorious banquet of consequences that is promised to you who are faithful. You will “be filled with the glory of the Lord” and “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of” your body, and all that the Father hath will be given to you.<sup>38</sup>

In such a banquet of consequences, the spiritual food we feast upon is delicious, savory, sweet, succulent, nourishing, and fulfilling and will

allow our hearts to rejoice. When we “come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted,”<sup>39</sup> we can follow the narrow path and the straight course that will bring us to the Holy One of Israel, “for the Lord God is his name.”<sup>40</sup>

Isaiah has promised that at the final banquet of consequences the Lord of Hosts “will swallow up death” and “wipe away tears” from all faces, and “we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”<sup>41</sup>

I leave my sure witness of the Father’s glorious plan and of the Savior’s love, Atonement, Resurrection, and divine guidance, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Notes

1. See 2 Nephi 28:22.
2. See 2 Nephi 15:20.
3. Merriam-Webster.com, s.v. “paradigm shift.”
4. See C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942).
5. D&C 89:4, 3, 5, 8–9.
6. See *Revelations in Context: The Stories Behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), 188; see also Jed Woodworth, “The Word of Wisdom,” 11 June 2013, *Revelations in Context*, [history.lds.org/article/doctrine-and-covenants-word-of-wisdom](http://history.lds.org/article/doctrine-and-covenants-word-of-wisdom).
7. D&C 89:18–19.
8. *Smoking and Health: Report of the Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service*, PHS publication no. 1103 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, 1964), 33; see also *The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General* (Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014), [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK294310](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK294310).
9. See “Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking,” *Smoking and Tobacco Use*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [cdc.gov/tobacco/data](http://cdc.gov/tobacco/data)

\_statistics/fact\_sheets/health\_effects/effects\_cig\_smoking.

10. Merriam-Webster.com, s.v. “stone.”

11. Merriam-Webster.com, s.v. “cold.”

12. CollinsDictionary.com, s.v. “party.”

13. See George E. Vaillant, *Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 108–9.

14. See Alvin Powell, “Decoding Keys to a Healthy Life,” *Science and Health, Harvard Gazette*, 2 February 2012, news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2012/02/decoding-keys-to-a-healthy-life.

15. See Vaillant, *Triumphs of Experience*, 292. By comparison, a separate long-term study of active Church members was very positive (see James E. Enstrom and Lester Breslow, “Lifestyle and Reduced Mortality Among Active California Mormons, 1980–2004,” *Preventive Medicine* 46, no. 2 [February 2008]: 133–36).

16. Kimberly Kindy and Dan Keating, “Wine, Women and Danger,” *Washington Post*, 24 December 2016, A1, A5; quoting Robert D. Brewer from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention alcohol program.

17. See “Fact Sheets: Underage Drinking,” *Alcohol and Public Health*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm.

18. See Anne Schuchat, “The CDC’s Recommendations to Help Prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders,” Editorials, *American Family Physician* 95, no. 1 (1 January 2017): 6–7.

19. See “Opioid Tide from Coast to Coast,” *New York Times*, 8 January 2017, A11.

20. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, November 1995; also lds.org/topics/family-proclamation.

21. “The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with no children living with them more than doubled since 1967” (in Emily Schondelmyer, “No Kids in the House: A Historical Look at Adults Living Without Children,” *Random Samplings*, United States Census Bureau, 20 December 2016, blogs

.census.gov/2016/12/20/no-kids-in-the-house-a-historical-look-at-adults-living-without-children.

22. See *World Fertility Patterns 2015: Data Booklet*, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2015, 6, un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/fertility/world-fertility-patterns-2015.pdf; “Births and Fertility Among the Resident Population: Year 2015,” Istat (Italian National Institute for Statistics), 28 November 2016, www.istat.it/en/archive/193397; “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050, Buddhists,” Religion and Public Life, Pew Research Center, 2 April 2015, pewforum.org/2015/04/02/Buddhists; Adam Taylor, “It’s Official: Japan’s Population Is Dramatically Shrinking,” *WorldViews, Washington Post*, 26 February 2016, washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/02/26/its-official-japans-population-is-dramatically-shrinking; and Ana Swanson, “Japan’s Birth Rate Problem Is Way Worse Than Anyone Imagined,” *Wonkblog, Washington Post*, 7 January 2015, washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/01/07/japans-birth-rate-problem-is-way-worse-than-anyone-imagined.

23. See *New Economic Reality: Demographic Winter*, BYUtv, two episodes, byutv.org/show/5e819b00-5e99-4bf4-931e-c154d3c2dc8d/new-economic-reality-demographic-winter.

24. See “Plight of Jewish Children,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10006124.

25. See “Data and Statistics,” Reproductive Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/data\_stats. I recognize that the number of abortions has declined in recent years, but the number is still extremely high.

26. Sometimes attributed to Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881).

27. TSWK, 328–29; see also *Eternal Marriage Student Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 14–18; also [lds.org/manual/eternal-marriage-student-manual/birth-control](https://www.lds.org/manual/eternal-marriage-student-manual/birth-control).

28. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Cornerstones of a Happy Home,” satellite broadcast fireside for husbands and wives, 29 January 1984, 6; also [lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/33108\\_eng.pdf](https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/33108_eng.pdf).

29. See “Abortion,” *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 17.3.1 (pp. 163–64). Section 17.3.1 provides limited abortion exceptions involving rape, incest, health of the mother, and severe defects of the baby.

30. See “Unmarried Members of the Church,” *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (Salt Lake

City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 1.3.3 (p. 4).

31. Moses 1:39.

32. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

33. N. Eldon Tanner, “Constancy Amid Change,” *Ensign*, November 1979.

34. Helaman 5:12.

35. Neal A. Maxwell, *Things As They Really Are* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 42.

36. Alma 30:60.

37. 1 Nephi 8:28.

38. D&C 84:32, 33; see also verses 34–38.

39. 2 Nephi 9:51.

40. 2 Nephi 9:41.

41. Isaiah 25:8, 9.