

## *“Put Away Childish Things”*

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**M**y wife’s father, Leslie James Anderson, grew up in the small town of Manti, Utah, about 80 miles south of here. In 1919, when Les was 14 years old, Sanpete County built a road up Manti Canyon using what was then a common method of detonating black blasting powder to remove difficult rocks and sharp canyon walls that could not be subdued any other way. Late that summer, Les, his cousin and best friend Lyle Anderson, and two other friends decided to go up that new canyon road to fish and camp overnight at Corduroy Reservoir. These young, adventure-some boys loaded their camping gear in a one-horse buggy and started up the canyon as a foursome, without any adult supervisors.

Along the way the boys found on the side of the road a supply of the explosive black powder that had been left behind by the road builders.<sup>†</sup> Les and his cousin Lyle were intrigued and excited by this discovery and anticipated the fun they could have with the powder that night around the campfire. They eagerly filled their pockets and a hat with as much black powder as they could hold.

Later on that afternoon, when they arrived at the camp, they turned their horse loose to return home to Manti, knowing the horse would be needed at home and that on their

return they could pull the little buggy down the hill by themselves. After pitching their camp and building a campfire, the boys thought they’d have some fun. At about nine o’clock that evening Les and Lyle started throwing some of the black powder into the fire and watching it explode with a bang. But with one of these explosions a spark landed in the hat filled with powder and ignited it. It exploded and then ignited the powder in their pockets. In an instant the air was filled with piercing screams, and the boys’ clothing was a mass of flames. The two boys in the tent rushed out to help Les and Lyle, but they couldn’t put out the flames until their friends were covered with deep burns, their clothing almost entirely burned off. The boys wrapped quilts around Les and Lyle, placed them as gently as possible in the buggy, and began pulling the buggy down the canyon in the dark.

All the way down the two badly burnt boys kept calling for water. In fact, at one point Les could hear water running in the creek close to the road. The buggy was going quite slowly at

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that moment, so Les rolled himself out of the buggy and into the water. Les said later that he thought this saved his life as the cool water eased the pain of his burns.

Les' cousin and best friend, Lyle, was not as fortunate; he stayed in the buggy near death as they returned down the rocky road to Manti, finally arriving home at about 11:00 p.m. Despite a constant vigil of medical attention throughout the night, the next morning he died.

It took Les two years to recuperate, including one full year of missed school. When I met him at age 53, although his face was scar free, he still had deep scars from his feet all the way up his back and along his arms. Thanks to the fasting and prayers of the good people of Manti and his own sheer will, he healed well enough to embrace the responsibilities of adulthood and live a full life. He served his country in World War II as a bombardment squadron commander in Italy, rising to the rank of colonel in the Army Air Corps. He returned safely after the war, was eventually elected mayor of Manti, and served faithfully in the Manti South Ward bishopric. The fruits of his faithfulness are manifest today in a large and faithful posterity.

In important ways, my dear young friends, you are like my father-in-law, Les, as he ventured up the canyon on that fateful day nearly 90 years ago: you have been given independence and responsibility at a relatively tender age in an environment filled with opportunity and beauty but also fraught with risks and even danger. Even as Les and his friends ventured off on their first camping trip alone, most of you have ventured out of the nest of your parents' home within the last several months or years and are now discovering how to be your own boss and live life on your own.

My desire today is to offer you some counsel that will be valuable as you face the sometimes rocky crossroads of life. May I suggest four principles I believe will prove priceless to your successful navigation of the next few important years?

First, set your own boundaries. Second, put away childish things. Third, separate yourself from the world. Fourth, build a rock-solid foundation.

### **First, Set Your Own Boundaries**

Just as Les faced the temptation and danger of the black powder, each of you will find yourselves facing temptations that you will have to decide to resist on your own. In your moments of trial there will be no parental supervision—a safety net on which your youthful virtue can rely. Realize you will need to set boundaries for yourself. Decide where you will draw the line, and then determine never to cross it.

The adversary would have you think that you can carelessly experiment with your new autonomy and flirt with temptation without lasting damages or consequences. He may suggest that sowing a few wild oats is all part of becoming an adult. He will likely suggest that such youthful experiments are really quite inconsequential and so one shouldn't even give them a second thought. He might rationalize that in 10 years who will even care if I have a few moments of supposed fun. Think again of my father-in-law. I imagine when he first spotted that black powder and held it in his hands, he likely felt little concern regarding its danger. Or perhaps he reasoned that if later on he felt there might be some danger, he could simply empty his pockets, rid himself of the powder at any time, and have nothing further to worry about.

Whether it's pornography in books, movies, or on the Internet; whether it's immoral music, salacious video games, necking and petting (or worse), drugs, or even daredevil diving and driving, Satan would have you believe you can try out intriguing temptations without getting burned. But following Satan's reasoning would be like spiritually playing with black powder. Remember my father-in-law, Les, and his cousin Lyle, just looking for a little fun throwing black powder into the campfire. Remember how Les spent two years of his precious youth

recuperating and endured a lifetime of physical scars. And remember his cousin Lyle, who lost his life because of a tragic mistake.

For any among you who have made serious mistakes and are feeling spiritually scarred, remember the words of Isaiah: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

Unlike my father-in-law, who endured a lifetime of physical scars, if you will repent, difficult though the path may be, the Savior has great power to heal you and to make you whole. For He said, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:42–43).

Remember Plato’s words: “It is the first and best of all victories for a man to conquer himself; but to be vanquished by himself is of all things the most shameful and vile” (*Laws*, Book I, trans. George Burges). And Bryant S. Hinckley, our prophet’s father, said it this way:

*When a man makes war on his own weaknesses he engages in the holiest war that mortals ever wage. The reward that comes from victory in this struggle is the most enduring, most satisfying, and the most exquisite that man ever experiences. In no other conflict is there so much at stake. In no other struggle are the values so precious and the results so compensating and so comforting.* [Bryant S. Hinckley, *That Ye Might Have Joy* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, c1958, 1965), 83; emphasis added]

Learn the art of self-mastery. If you do, you will be blessed with the companionship of the Holy Ghost and you will be guided as you make important decisions about your future.

### **Second, Put Away Childish Things**

The Apostle Paul advised, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child,

I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11).

It’s time now to grow up!

When you were children, your parents worked hard to provide you the necessities of life and many opportunities. Much of high school is a very lighthearted and entertaining experience. Now the world and the Church need you to be less on the receiving end and more on the giving end. The summer before he left on his mission, my son and I discussed what he was planning to do for the few months before his departure. When I suggested he get a job, he said, “Dad, that doesn’t sound like much fun.” I told him that day, as I tell you now, that we must learn that our highest purpose in this life is more than just having fun. You must learn that the purpose of this life is to keep the commandments of God and serve your fellow man.

Putting away our own desires and following the Lord’s course for us is not always easy, but my family and I have experienced the joy that can come from doing so. About 20 years ago we were living in Southern California when we were called by the president of the Church to move to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and oversee the mission there. We accepted the call gladly, but in doing so found that we were giving up many things that we had worked hard to achieve. I had to sever business connections that I had nurtured for many years. My wife gave up her position on the town school board. We had three children still at home, and they had to leave behind friends and school activities that they loved. As we described to a friend how we were going to give up 20 years of community connections and move from the sunny shores of Southern California to the windy shores of Canada for three years, he looked at us as though we were crazy and asked, “You’re going to do *what?*”

The work of the mission was demanding and never ending and just as challenging as we had imagined. What we received in return,

though, was the richness of a full life. We saw missionaries grow and thrive as they committed themselves to the gospel. We shared in the joy of new converts as they experienced God’s love, sometimes for the first time in their lives. And we rejoiced to see our own children mature and find strength in their own convictions. All of the joy exceeded what we had experienced in our previous lives. Just a few days before we returned to the United States, the stake president in Halifax invited all of our newfound friends and converts to our last sacrament meeting in Canada. As we looked around and saw all of these wonderful people, we felt extraordinarily blessed. We felt the Lord’s presence in our lives, and that was worth any sacrifices we had made.

One of India’s most famous poets once wrote:

*I slept and dreamt that life was joy.  
I awoke and saw that life was service.  
I acted and behold, service was joy.*

[Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), quoted in Amit Goswami, *The Self-Aware Universe* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1993), 268]

You will find the deepest, most satisfying joy will come as you put away the childish pursuits of your youth and settle in your hearts that you will do Heavenly Father’s will and not your own. Think of the Savior’s example. He always followed the will of His Father—even in the Garden of Gethsemane: “And he went a little further and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). The purpose of this personal suffering was partly explained by the Apostle Paul: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:8–9).

May our Heavenly Father grant that you and I will learn obedience to God’s will—if

necessary, by the things we suffer. One of the great characterizations given to us by King Benjamin is that a Saint “yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit . . . , and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

Consider the difference between *childish* and *childlike*. In our efforts to become the latter, we should avoid the former. *Childlike* means having a sweet, innocent unspoiled quality; it means teachable, submissive, obedient, trusting. *Childish*, on the other hand, suggests irresponsibility, self-centeredness, or a lack of emotional restraint. Christ asks us to become as a child, but clearly we are here to mature, to be responsible for how we spend our time and how we treat those around us.

When we have successfully put away childish things, we will want to work toward filling our adult life with spiritual things. We do this by listening to the Holy Spirit. For if we don’t, we will be in greater jeopardy than if we had never received the truth, and, as the Savior said, “The last state of that man [will be] worse than the first” (Matthew 12:45).

### **Third, Separate Yourself from the World**

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.

This has a very real application for you. Is the Honor Code a hassle for you? Is it something you consider as only on-campus behavior? Are you constantly trying to cut corners and follow the world’s standards? Or have you truly embraced the Honor Code?

I would like to call your attention to the word of the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith concerning the last days. This revelation was given before the Church was organized: "Behold, the world is ripening in iniquity; and it must needs be that the children of men are stirred up unto repentance, both the Gentiles and also the house of Israel" (D&C 18:6). If the world was ripening in iniquity in June 1829, when this revelation was given, it must be a whole lot riper today. In fact, in Joseph Smith's translation of Matthew, the Lord stated that "as it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man" (JS—M 1:41). We remember, of course, that the world was so wicked during Noah's time that it was necessary to "baptize" the world with the great flood.

Brigham Young stated:

*It was revealed to me in the commencement of this Church, that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise. [JD 13:280]*

In a conference address in October 1993, President Hinckley quoted an article from the *Wall Street Journal*:

*"Since 1960, the U.S. population has increased 41%. . . .*

*"But during the same . . . period there has been a 560% increase in violent crime; a 419% increase in illegitimate births; a quadrupling in divorce rates; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; more than a 200% increase in the teenage suicide rate."*

The prophet then added:

*The health of any society, the happiness of its people, their prosperity, and their peace all find their roots in the teaching of children by fathers and mothers. [Gordon B. Hinckley, "Bring Up a Child in the Way He Should Go," *Ensign*,*

*November 1993, 54–59, 60; see also William J. Bennett, "Quantifying America's Decline," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 March 1993, A12]*

Unfortunately those gloomy statistics from back in 1993 have not reversed themselves in the last 10 or 11 years.

Look to the prophet for your standard. I repeat: Don't try to just be a few notches better than the world. If you follow that sinking ship, even if you stay dry a little longer, you'll still eventually end up under water.

#### **Fourth, Build a Rock-Solid Foundation**

This is a critical time for you. You are building the foundation for the rest of your lives. Your decision to serve a productive full-time mission, your commitment to prepare for a worthy temple marriage, your willingness to pay a full tithe, and your diligent preparation for an honorable profession are the foundation for your adult life. Remember, the family is the foundation not only of the Church but the foundation of your personal happiness. As stated in the proclamation on the family: "Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102).

The Master Himself said:

*And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. [Matthew 7:26–27]*

When our children were younger, our family had the opportunity to spend a few days each summer at a beach near San Clemente, California. While we were there, we were told about some houses that had been built on a sandy foundation at North Beach. I was so surprised to hear about these houses built on the sand that I took

my wife, Verla, and our children, and we went down to the beach and looked at one of these houses. The house was still standing, the walls were straight and still intact, and it had a roof; yet it was leaning.

It received a building permit and, as a matter of fact, was built by the city! But the building had to be destroyed. What went wrong? When winter storms came, the foundation collapsed, and the structure was condemned and destroyed. With a foundation of sand, even the best-laid plans were doomed to fail.

Contrast North Beach near San Clemente, California, with a little island on the opposite coast of the United States. More than 300 years ago this rather obscure piece of real estate called Manhattan Island changed hands. Some enterprising Dutch Pilgrims purchased it for the alleged grand sum of \$24.50. Now what was so good about Manhattan Island? It didn't have a beautiful beach. At the time it was purchased, according to one source, the only thing it was good for was growing peaches.

I brought a photograph today of Manhattan Island. This picture was taken when the World Trade Center Towers were still erect. Manhattan Island has one thing that has made it a great place to build a house or building. It has a solid granite foundation underneath a thin layer of topsoil. Today this granite schist, also called the Manhattan schist, is the foundation for billions of dollars' worth of commercial and residential buildings that have been built over the centuries. Broadway, Park Avenue, Wall Street, the United Nations, and the Empire State Building—all of these world-famous buildings have withstood the test of time. They are built on a solid foundation.

In fact, the World Trade Center foundation was so solid that in spite of the fire and the terrible collapse of those buildings on September 11, the foundation itself still stood because it was built on the Manhattan schist. To quote the *New York Times*, "It not only caught the incal-

culable power of the collapse, but managed—under the assault—to prevent the Hudson's waters from flooding Lower Manhattan" (Joel Meyerowitz, "Saving the Wall That Saved New York," *New York Times*, 27 February 2003, OP-ED, A31).

The Manhattan schist gives new emphasis to the words of the Savior:

*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

[Matthew 7:24–25]

Surely there is no body of young people to be found in the entire world that can match your spiritual, intellectual, and physical preparation. You have valuable training in academics and religion. You have the fine example of parents, family, bishops, and other leaders who love you and continue to support you. Many of you have had transcendent missionary service that has made you wise beyond your years. I echo President Hinckley's words:

*I have great confidence in our young people as a whole. I regard you as the finest generation in the history of the Church. I compliment you, and I have in my heart a great feeling of love and respect and appreciation for you. [Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Chosen Generation," *Ensign*, May 1992, 69]*

I bear witness to the divine mission of the Savior, to the responsibility that we hold at Brigham Young University—one of the crown jewels of the Lord's Church and His people. It is my prayer that each of us will avoid the "black powder" and the sands of North Beach and will build our house, as it were, upon the rock of a Manhattan Island.

We can do this by following the words of Omni in the Book of Mormon:

*And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved. [Omni 1:26]*

I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Note**

<sup>†</sup> This incident was reported by S. Peter Peterson, editor, in "Fatal Accident: Two Boys Badly Burned, One Fatally, Other Seriously," *Manti Messenger*, Friday, 5 September 1919, 1. It was also used in a short story written by Nora R. Mickelson, a neighbor of Leslie Anderson.