

D&C Lesson # 44
Being Good Citizens
(D&C 58:21-22, 26-28; 98:4-10; 134; Articles of Faith 1:12)
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(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. After advising us of our responsibility to be good citizens, the Lord told us “For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

“Verily I say men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness (D&C 58:26-7).”

A. One who knows much about history or current affairs should realize that a person (and a family’s) life can be significantly affected when the world around them suddenly is caught up in turmoil. Consider all those millions who are refugees today because the community that surrounded them became entangled in war.

B. This means **we cannot live our lives in isolation**, unconcerned about the world around us.

C. Rather, **we need to do all we can to help mollify any negative conditions in the outer world, that we may then live our lives in peace.**

D. In encouraging Latter-day Saints to become more involved in helping preserve religious freedom, Elder Quentin L. Cook recently said: “The voices of people of faith need to be heard and amplified. When this is done, it creates a pause in the discourse and allows people to evaluate where they stand on a particular matter. Silence allows the rhythm of negativity to continue uninterrupted and unchallenged. This erodes the confidence of people of faith.” [Speech given at a symposium on Religious Liberty and the Law in Los Angeles, quoted in Deseret News, Saturday, November 4, 2017, pp. B1-B4).

Elder Cook quoted Neal A. Maxwell who said, “With regards to significant challenges we should not allow ‘uncontested slam-dunks.’”

II. We live in a time when there is great need for becoming involved as good citizens.

A. And most of us are not doing as much as we can.

1. It is shocking that Utah is reported to have one of the lowest voting turn outs!

B. While we should be the most engaged, too many may be among the least.

C. Again the Lord counseled: “When the wicked rule the people mourn.

“Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently ... (D&C 98:9-10).”

III. Raising our voice and being a participant is actually easier than it has ever been before.

A. While we can’t do everything, there are many things where we can make a difference.

B. While it is good to become physically active in community-wide events, one can also become involved in less physical ways. We can do much even on the internet, or through the mail systems.

IV. For example, what can we do to help keep the Peace?

A. We can vote! We can vote for those we feel will do the best things for peace.

1. However, voting is not enough. **We need to become informed of the issues and the people for whom we vote before we do so. Otherwise our voting may actually do more harm than good.**

2. To truly be informed we should always listen to the actual words of candidates, and not to those who relay them through lenses of their own prejudices, or “interpret” them for us.

3. We should get our information from sources which give **good in-depth background** (like books, newspapers and news magazines). We should look for material which is as unbiased as possible, giving all sides.

B. We should vote not only for those running for national office, but also for those in our communities. Sometimes it is community issues which have the most effect on us personally.

V. What can we do to help influence the Moral Standards of the society in which we live?

A. There are actually many groups who are fighting for higher moral standards. We can support them financially and in other ways, according to our time and resources.

1. One of my favorite causes is the National Center on Sexual Exploitation. (It used to be Morality in Media). Let me share some of the things they have recently done, to confirm things *can* be done.

2. Dawn Hawkins, an LDS woman who is a leader in this group, was invited to speak about the harms of pornography at an Eastern University. She was shocked to find 2/3rds of the audience protestors. With courage, she showed them the research: that pornography “damages the brain.” It actually shrinks parts of the brain dealing with motivation and decision making. She showed studies that pornography is “linked to increased sexual violence....” and other problems. As she presented the research, suddenly heads began to nod “yes.”

However, in a question and answer period many of the students continued to say things that obviously had been promulgated by pop culture, which she knew were lies.

One of her organization’s goals is “to reclaim the younger generations by teaching them the truth... around the public health crisis of pornography. We want to change companies [who influence them]... [so they] will stop normalizing harmful behaviors. If we can break through to these college students, we have the chance to turn the tide on our culture.”

3. This organization (and others) have also been fighting human trafficking.

The sponsor of a house bill to amend a law that allows online sex trafficking has reached out to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation for help in this fight because they trust them “to follow the facts and seek true justice.”

So they hosted a “major symposium in the U.S. Capitol building... The room was packed beyond capacity... [with influential people] looking to learn more.”

Obviously this organization has taken on some daunting tasks. **But such efforts have and can have success and can show to the Lord what *our* desires are.** We can either make efforts of our own, or we can support such efforts as these financially or in other ways.

The work of Timothy Ballard against human trafficking is also a worthy cause. And there are many others which we can find to support if we search for them. We can support them financially and we can make others aware of the good works being done, thus gathering more support.

VI. Above all, we can conscientiously avoid media which fosters lower moral standards.

A. Various LDS groups have been working to overcome the low moral trends of the media. Are we supporting them?

B. Frankly I am disappointed at how little the general LDS public appears to value higher moral standards in media. Movies that are worthwhile are not supported. And the preponderance of R rated movies shows that the public still supports them instead.

Movie critics, rather than focusing on what really matters, seem to always put down movies which are uplifting, criticizing them for technical shortcomings, overlooking what is of greater importance: how will the movie affect moral values of the public? For too often the same critics praise movies that are exciting, are technically good, but are death to higher values.

The things we watch have more effect upon us and our families than we give credit for, particularly if we view the same concepts or ideas over and over and over again.

The recent shocking news coming out of Hollywood shows the kind of people our dollars have been supporting. Are we going to continue to support such a system of evil?

3. We would be wise to develop our own system for evaluating movies. I can overlook a few technical flaws, for example, if the overall message in the story is positive and uplifting.

VII. What can we do to help overcome the divisiveness in our society today?

A. First we should understand **in most cases there is more than one side**, for more than one kind of people or group of people are affected by political actions.

B. When we carefully listen to and understand each side, while we may not agree, at least we will understand the issues as they see them. **Then we will be less hostile to other people and their opinions.**

1. If we truly understand the fears and concerns of others, we are more likely to engage in meaningful dialogue, which then can lead to efforts to move forward together.

2. Oftentimes others' fears stem from misunderstandings. When we are fully informed it is possible to help clarify misunderstandings when we engage in meaningful dialogue.

3. While not all other opinions may be valid, we should still avoid the heated divisiveness which is negatively affecting our society today.

C. Elder Cook gave this advice about public discourse: While his words are applied to encourage more dialogue in defending religious liberty, his comments can relate to all engaged in some form of public dialogue.

He said our dialogue should be statesman-like and respectful, but still firm. He warned about being too aggressive, but said "we can do a better job of teaching and educating our responsible friends." And he gave hope that in doing so we can help protect, with others, "our shared values [*Ibid*]."

Through such efforts, hopefully we can keep the larger world in which we live stable. Then we will have greater opportunity to raise our families according to the principles of the Gospel, and live in a manner pleasing to the Lord.