

1 **Alma 3:5**

There is an entire subculture that celebrates contemporary gangs and their criminal conduct with music, clothing styles, language, attitudes, and behaviors. Many of you have watched as trendy friends have embraced the style as something that was “fashionable” and “cool,” only to be dragged into the subculture....

...I do not believe that you can stand for truth and right while wearing anything that is unbecoming one who holds the priesthood of God.

M. Russell Ballard, *Conference Report*, Oct. 1997, 51-53; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 38-39.

2 **Alma 3: 6-19**

Nephite, Lamanite

Here God places his mark on people as a curse, yet it is an artificial mark which they actually place upon themselves. The mark was not a racial thing

but was acquired by “whosoever suffered himself to be led away by the Lamanites (Alma 3:10); Alma moreover defines a Nephite as anyone observing “the traditions of their fathers...” (Alma 3:11). Which makes the difference between Nephite and Lamanite a cultural, not a racial, one.... The cultural picture may not be the whole story of the dark skin of the Lamanites, but it is an important part of that story and is given great emphasis by the Book of Mormon itself.

Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaradites* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952], 85.

3 Originally, the Lamanites were the children of Laman, Lemuel, and some of the family of Ishmael; but as the centuries passed there were many defections in both nations, when the dissatisfied would join the opposing race and affiliate and intermix with them, so that the two names at last became more an indication of religion and civilization than of birth.

George Reynolds, *A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973], 395

4 It should be noted that the Lamanites were often absorbed by, and were called Nephites when they were righteous, and it is true also that the Nephites when they rebelled and became wicked, were often times called Lamanites, and there was undoubtedly a considerable mixture among them.

Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Report*, Apr 1949 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949], 107.

5 **Alma 3:13**

They set a mark upon themselves

I cannot understand why any young man—or young woman,... would wish to undergo the painful process of disfiguring the skin with various multi-colored representations of people, animals, and various symbols.... Fathers, caution your sons against having their bodies tattooed.... A tattoo is graffiti on the temple of the body.

Likewise the piercing of the body for multiple rings in the ears, in the nose, even in the tongue. Can they possibly think that is beautiful? It is a passing fancy, but its effects can be permanent.... The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have declared that we discourage tattoos and also piercing of the body for other than medical purposes. We do not, however, take any position on the minimal piercing of the ears by women for one pair of earrings—one pair.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Conference Report*, Oct. 2000 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000], 70-71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 52.

6 Alma 3:4-16
Appearance

Tell me that it is not true that the dress and grooming paint an immediate picture and classify a person? The famous Jerry Reuben said young kids identify short hair with authority, discipline, unhappiness, boredom, hatred of life and long hair with just letting go. Wherever we go, our hair tells people where we stand on Vietnam, lawless campus destructions and drugs. We're living TV commercials for the revolution. Long hair is the beginning of our liberation from sexual oppression. What group do you wish to follow and with which group do you wish to identify? Will you turn down authority and discipline and rebel everything that is right? Do you wish to be classed with men who look manly or men who look effeminate.

Now beloved youth, we love you. We believe you are strong enough and smart enough to do as you wish; buck all the conventions; rebel at all disciplined authority. But remember, others have learned their lessons early in their lives and profited thereby: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect," says the divine authority. Spencer W. Kimball, *Speeches of the Year, 1974*, BYU Devotional, Sept 17, 1974.

7 Without belaboring this subject, may I merely say: do not underestimate the important symbolic and actual effect of appearance. Persons who are well groomed and modestly dressed invite the companionship of the Spirit of our Father in Heaven and are able to exercise a wholesome influence upon those around them. Persons who are unkempt and careless about their appearance, or adopt the visual symbols of those who often oppose our ideals, expose themselves and persons around them to influences that are degrading and dissonant...

Now may I make a personal reference, which I'll try to treat in such a way as to preserve confidentiality. It involved a beautiful, young wife and mother from a prominent family. She had gone away from her home and was now in the East. She had gone out into an area where she and her husband had taken up with those in the ghetto, and she wrote me a rather interesting letter, and I quote only a paragraph: "Tomorrow my husband will shave off his long, full beard. Because of the request of the Stake President and your evil direction in the *Priesthood Bulletin*, he must not have the appearance of evil or rebellion if he is to get a recommend to go to the temple. I have wept anguished tears; the faces of Moses and Jacob were bearded, and to me wisdom and spirituality of the old prophets reflected from the face of my own spiritual husband. It is like cutting out for me a symbol of the good things my generation has learned." Then the letter concluded with a challenge to me: "We are prepared for clear, specific, hard-line direction as youth. Wishy-washy implications are not heard very well here. We look to you to tell it straight."

I don't know whether she knew just what she was asking for when she asked me to tell it straight, but these are some things I wrote to her: "In your letter you address me as 'Dear President Lee,' and in your first sentence you refer to me as the Lord's prophet. Now, in your letter you tell me that you are saddened because with the shaving off of the beard and the cutting of the hair, which, to you, made your husband appear as the prophets Moses and Jacob, he would no longer bear that resemblance. I wonder if you might not be wiser to think of following the appearance of the prophets of today. President David O. McKay had no beard or long hair; neither did President Joseph Fielding Smith; and neither does your humble servant whom you have acknowledged as the Lord's prophet."

"The inconsistency in your letter has made me reflect upon an experience that I had in the mission field when, in company with some missionaries and the mission president, we were at Carthage Jail, where the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, took place. In that meeting there were recounted the events that led up to their martyrdom. Then the mission president made some significant comments. He said, 'When the Prophet Joseph Smith died there were many who died spiritually with Joseph.' Likewise there were many who died spiritually with Brigham Young, and so with others who were president of the Church, because they chose to follow the man who passed on, rather than giving allegiance to his successor upon whom the mantle of leadership had been given by the Lord's appointment. And then I asked her, "Are you following, in looks, prophets who lived hundreds of years ago? Are you really true to your faith as a member of the Church today? Why is it that you want your husband to

look like Moses and Jacob rather than to look like modern prophets to whom you are expressing allegiance? If you will give this sober thought, your tears will dry, and you'll begin to have some new thoughts."

My final advice to you lovely girls who are present, perhaps likewise struggling for answers to difficult questions: Accept this work of counsel and apply it to yourselves, you girls, as well as you young men. Keep your eye upon those who preside over the Church today, or tomorrow and pattern your life after them rather than to dwell upon how ancient prophets may have looked or thought or spoken, because if you really believe what you say, you will honor the one who presides today as a prophet, seer and revelator. For the Lord gives to his leaders in their own time the things that he would have given to his church for the guidance of his people in this present day.

President Harold B. Lee, *Speeches of the Year, 1972-1973*, (1973), 101.

Alma 3:26-27

- 8 *Every man receiveth wages of him who he listed to obey.*
The spirits of the just are...blessed in their departure to the world of spirits.... They are not far from us, and know and understand our thoughts, feelings, and motions, and are often pained therewith.
Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. by Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 326.
- 9 Every person who desires and strives to be a Saint is closely watched by fallen spirits that came here when Lucifer fell, and by the spirits of wicked persons who have been here in tabernacles and departed from them.... Those spirits are never idle, they are watching every person who wishes to do right and are continually prompting them to do wrong.
Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1860], 7:239.
- 10 There is a vast number of fallen spirits, cast out with him here on the earth. They do not die and disappear; they have not bodies only as they enter the tabernacles of men. They...are not to be seen with the sight of the eye. But there are many evil spirits amongst us, and they labor to overthrow the Church and kingdom of God. There never was a prophet in any age of the world but what the devil was continually at his elbow.
Wilford Woodruff, *Journal of Discourses* [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1871], 13:163
- 11 If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates.
Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Comp. by Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 226-227.
- 12 Our fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters and friends who have passed away from this earth, having been faithful and worthy to enjoy these rights and privileges, may have a mission given them to visit their relatives and friends upon the earth again, bringing from the divine Presence messages of love, of warning, or reproof and instruction to those whom they had learned to love in the flesh.
Joseph F. Smith, *Journal of Discourses* 22:351, 29 Jan. 1882; as quoted in *Latter-day Prophets Speak*, ed. By Daniel H. Ludlow [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1951], 31.
- 13 If our eyes were open to see the spirit world around us,... we would not be so unguarded and careless and so indifferent whether we had the spirit and power of God with us or not but we would be continually watchful and prayerful to our Heavenly Father for His Holy Spirit and His holy angels to be around about us to strengthen us to overcome every evil influence.
George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truths*, ed. By Jerreld L. Newquist [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974], 1:82.
- 14 Let me read you what Parley P. Pratt said about this matter. "In all ages and dispensations God has revealed many important instructions and warnings to men by means of dreams. When the outward organs of thought and perception are released from their activity, the nerves unstrung, the whole of mortal humanity lies hushed in quiet slumbers in order to renew its strength and vigor, it is then that the spiritual organs are at liberty in a certain degree to

assume their wanted functions... Their kindred spirits, their guardian angels, then hover about them with the fondest affection, the most anxious solicitude. Spirit communes with spirit, thought meets thought, soul blends with soul, in all the raptures of mutual pure and eternal love. In this situation the spiritual organs are susceptible of converse with Deity, or of communion with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. In this situation we frequently hold sister, son or daughter, or with the former husband or wife of our bosom whose affections for us, being rooted and grounded in the eternal elements, issuing from under the sanctuary of love's eternal fountain, can never be lessened or diminished by death, distance of space, or length of years." When we begin to understand that, beyond sight, as Brigham Young said, is the spirit world right here round about us. If our spiritual eyes could be open, we could see others visiting with us, directing us. And if we will learn not to be so sophisticated that we rule out that possibility of impressions from those who are beyond sight, then we too may have a dream that may direct us as a revelation. Harold B. Lee, *BYU Devotional*, 15 Oct. 1952.

- 15 Our lives are made up of thousands of everyday choices. Over the years these little choices will be bundled together and show clearly what we value.

Boyd K. Packer, *Conference Report*, Oct. 1980, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 21.

- 16 I am convinced that one of the profound themes of the Book of Mormon, one which may not yet have been developed enough in our teaching of young people, is the role and prevalence and central participation of angels in the gospel story.... Obviously I speak here not alone of the angel Moroni but also those more personal ministering angels who are with us and around us, empowered to help us and who do exactly that.... Perhaps more of us... could literally, or at least figuratively, behold the angels around us if we would but awaken from our stupor and hear the words God is trying to tell us.... I believe we need to speak of and believe in and bear testimony to, the ministry of angels more than we sometimes do. They constitute one of God's great methods of witnessing through the veil, and no document in all this world teaches that principle so clearly and so powerfully as does the Book of Mormon.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *CES Symposium*, BYU, 9 Aug. 1994, 16-17, 19.

- 17 We forget that God and angels are looking upon us; we forget that the spirits of just men made perfect and our ancient fathers... are gazing upon us, and that our acts are open to the inspection of all the authorized agencies of the invisible world. And, forgetting these things sometimes, we act the part of fools, and the Spirit of God is grieved; it withdraws from us, and we are then left to grope our way in the dark.

John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, ed. By G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987], 179.

- 18 [A missionary testimony meeting while David O. McKay was serving in Scotland in 1899] During the progress of the meeting, an elder on his own initiative arose and said, "Brethren, there are angels in this room."... President James L. McMurrin arose and confirmed that statement by pointing to one brother sitting just in front of me saying, "Yes, brethren, there are angels in this room, and one of them is the guardian angel of that young man sitting there." And he designated one who today is a patriarch of the Church. Pointing to another elder, he said, "And one is the guardian angel of that young man there," and singled out one whom I had known from childhood.... He turned to me and ... said: "Let me say to you, Brother David, ... if you will keep the faith, you will yet sit in the leading councils of the Church."

David O. McKay, *Cherished Experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay*, comp. by Clare Middlemiss [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1955], 13-14.

19 I feel quite confident that the eye of Joseph, the Prophet, and of the martyrs of this dispensation, and of Brigham [Young], and John [Taylor], and Wilford [Woodruff], and those faithful men who were associated with them in their ministry upon the earth, are carefully guarding the interests of the kingdom of God.... I believe they are as deeply interested in our welfare today,... with greater capacity, with far more interest, behind the veil, than they were in the flesh... they see us, they are solicitous for our welfare, they love us now more than ever.

Joseph F. Smith, *Conference Report*, Apr. 1916, 2-3; as quoted in *Latter-day Prophets Speak*, ed. By Daniel H. Ludlow [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1951], 31.

20 An evidence that those in the Spirit World know of the work we do here in the Temples was related by President Wood of the Alberta Temple. While sealing a group of children to their parents, in the midst of the ceremony he felt an impression to ask the mother who was present, "Sister, does this list contain the names of all your children?" She said, "Yes." He began again but once more he stopped and asked if the list named all her children. She told him there were no more children. He attempted to proceed, but a third time was impelled to ask: "My Sister, have you not lost a child whose name is not on this list?" Then she said, "Yes, I do remember now. We did lose a little baby. It was born alive and then died soon after. I had forgotten to put its name down." The name was given, and then it, being the first born, was named first and all were sealed to the parents.

Then President Wood said: "Every time I started to seal the children I heard a voice say: 'Mother, don't forget me,' and I could not go any further." The appeal was made each time until the omission was discovered.

Melvin J. Ballard, *Church News*, 20 Jan. 1940, 2; as quoted in *Exceptional Stories from the Lives of Our Apostles*, comp. by Leon R. Hartshorn [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973], 17.

21 In the gospel of Jesus Christ we have help from both sides of the veil. When disappointment and discouragement strike—and they will—we need to remember that if our eyes could be opened, we would see horses and chariots of fire as far as the eye can see, riding at great speed to come to our protection. [2 Kings 6:14-17] They will always be there, these armies of heaven, in defense of Abraham's seed. We have been given this promise from heaven.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *However Long and Hard the Road* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985], 13-14.