

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 24 "Create in Me a Clean Heart" (2 Samuel 11–12; Psalm 51)

LESSON GOAL: To encourage us to be chaste in thought and action and to repent of our sins.

Essential Question: WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DO FOR ETERNAL LIFE?

The story of the decline of David is a warning for all of us. David could have fixed this problem so many times along the way. We need to analyze the areas where David could have done things differently.

1. David's Sin – (2 Samuel 11:2-5)

- At what point did David first sin in his desire for Bathsheba?

D&C 42:23: And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out.

- What should David have done when he saw Bathsheba?

2. The power of thought

- Unclean, immoral thoughts might lead people to commit sexual sins.
 - As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).
- Influences that might plant thought seeds
 - An idle mind

-- "Things were getting too easy for David; he had leisure to stay at home while Joab and his men were out fighting Ammonites and Syrians. In his leisure he looked from his rooftop at his neighbor's wife. Leisure and lust led to adultery and then to murder, which sins had eternal repercussions, as well as tragic earthly results" (OT Student Manual, 290).

- The media: television, movies and videos, magazines, books and music

President Spencer W. Kimball: "Pornography and erotic stories and pictures are worse than polluted food. **Shun them.** The body has power to rid itself of sickening food. That person who entertains filthy stories or pornographic pictures and literature records them in his marvelous human computer, the brain, which can't forget this filth. **Once recorded, it will always remain there, subject to recall—filthy images**" (Teachings of SWKimball, 283).

- Unwholesome dating activities for our youth

President Gordon B. Hinckley: "I heard Elder John A. Widtsoe ... say, 'It is my observation that a young man and a young woman who violate the principles of morality soon end up hating one another.' I have observed the same thing. **There may be words of love to begin with, but there will be words of anger and bitterness later**" ("True to the Faith," *Ensign*, June 1996, 5).

- Flirting after marriage
- Places and/or activities that do not encourage the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost
- Fashion
- We avoid being tempted to commit sexual sins by making a conscious effort to control our thoughts.

President Spencer W. Kimball: "As a man thinketh, so does he. If he thinks about it long enough, he is likely to do it, whether it be theft, moral sin, or suicide. **Thus the time to protect against the calamity is when the thought begins to shape itself. Destroy the seed and the plant will never grow.** Man...can change his thought pattern and become the architect of his destiny" (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, 114).

Elder Boyd K. Packer: "Have you noticed that without any real intent on your part, in the middle of almost any performance, a **shady little thought** may creep in from the wings and attract your attention? "What do you do at a time like that, when the stage of your mind is commandeered by the imps of unclean thinking? Whether they be the gray ones that are almost clean or filthy ones that leave no room for doubt?"

"If you can control your thoughts, you can overcome habits—even degrading, personal habits. If you can learn to master them, you will have a happy life.

"I would teach you this. **Choose from among the sacred music of the Church a favorite hymn**, one with words that are uplifting and music that is reverent, one that makes you feel inspiration. . . . "Now, use this hymn as the place for your thoughts to go. Make it your emergency channel. Whenever you find that these shady actors have slipped from the sidelines of your thinking onto the stage of your mind, put on this record, as it were. As the music begins, the unworthy thoughts will slip shamefully away. **Because it is uplifting and clean, the baser thoughts will disappear**, for while virtue, by choice, will not associate with filth, **evil cannot tolerate the presence of light**. . . . Once you learn to clear the stage of your mind from unworthy thoughts, keep it busy with learning things that are righteous" (CR, Oct 1976).

3. David Compounds His Sin

- David arranges the Death of Uriah, Bathsheba's Husband -- (2 Samuel 11:6-13)
- David attempts to hide his immoral behavior – (2 Samuel 11:14-17)

Elder Richard G. Scott: "Do not take comfort in the fact that your transgressions are not known by others. That is like an ostrich with his head buried in the sand. He sees only darkness and feels comfortably hidden. In reality, he is ridiculously conspicuous. Likewise our every act is seen by our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son. They know everything about us....

"If you have seriously transgressed, you will not find any lasting satisfaction or comfort in what you have done. Excusing transgression with a cover-up may appear to fix the problem, but it does not. **The tempter is intent on making public your most embarrassing acts at the most harmful time. Lies weave a pattern that is ever more confining and becomes a trap that Satan will spring to your detriment**" (*Ensign*, May 1995, 77).

President Marion G. Romney: "David, ... though highly favored of the Lord (he was referred to as a man after God's own heart), yielded to temptation. His unchastity led to murder, and as a consequence, he lost his family's and his exaltation" (CR, Apr. 1979, 60).

4. David is told that he will be punished because of his sins – (2 Samuel 12:1–23)

WHY ARE WE SOMETIMES UNABLE TO RECOGNIZE OUR OWN SINFULNESS?

5. A repentant David seeks forgiveness

Psalms 38:2-10 – How David feels because of his sin

Psalms 51:1-12 – What David asks the Lord to do for him

Psalms 51:13-17 – David's promises to show the reality of his repentance

Elder David A. Bednar: "The standard is clear. If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing... Because the Spirit cannot abide that which is vulgar, crude, or immodest, then clearly such things are not for us... We should remember that the covenant promise is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*. This supernal blessing applies to every single member of the Church who has been baptized, confirmed, and instructed to 'receive the Holy Ghost'" ("That We May Always Have His Spirit to Be with Us," *Ensign*, May 2006, 30).

6. The necessity for temptation

1. Strange as it sounds, **temptation is necessary for our spiritual growth**. If we weren't tempted, we wouldn't be able to choose between good and evil, "And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet" (D&C 29:39). **And if we couldn't choose good when offered an alternative, we couldn't grow spiritually** (2 Nephi 2:11–30). (New Era, Questions and Answers, Dec. 2013).

2. **Rulon G. Craven:** "Temptation is a necessary part of our earthly experience. The Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith explains the reason why we are tempted: "It must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet" (D&C 29:39). (General Conference Address, April 1996).

3. **Ian S. Ardern:** We must decide deep down inside that we want to be better and then act upon that desire so the waters of revelation can run freely. Even with the best desires, we are tempted to stray from the path of righteousness—**that is part of mortality**, for we are here to be tested and "tried in all things" (BYU Hawaii Devotional 9/25/2012).

4. Also, **it's important to know that it's not wrong to be tempted**. Even Jesus was tempted. "He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22). You can look to His example—and the examples of many others in the scriptures—to help you. (New Era, Questions and Answers, Dec. 2013).

5. **Elder George Q. Cannon:** "Unless they [individuals] were exposed to temptation they never could know themselves, their own powers, their own weaknesses nor the power of God. If Satan had no power to tempt mankind, they would be in a state where they could neither know good nor evil; they could not know happiness nor misery. All their powers would lie dormant, for there would be nothing to arouse them. They would be destitute of that experience which prepares men to become like God, their Eternal Father" (Gospel Truth, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, [1987], 109).

7. The effects of temptation

1. **Rulon G. Craven:** In the Book of Mormon, Nephi explains the consequences of yielding to temptation: "The temptations of the devil ... blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost" (1 Ne. 12:17). **To blind the eyes is not to see or acknowledge the consequences of our actions**. To harden the heart is to ignore or not be willing to accept counsel. To be led into the broad roads is to give in to worldly enticements and lose the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. (CR, Apr. 1996).

2. **Brigham Young** stated: "Many think that the Devil has rule and power over both body and spirit. Now, I want to tell you that **he does not hold any power over man, only so far as the body overcomes the spirit that is in a man**, through yielding to the spirit of evil. ... The spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit" (Discourses of Brigham Young, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 69–70). (Conference Report, April 1996).

8. The antidotes to temptation

1. **Rulon G. Craven**: Members of the Church can overcome temptation by (1) **obedience to the guiding principles** and doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ, (2) **following the counsel of our prophets** and leaders, and (3) **living** in such a way that our lives are constantly **influenced by the power of the Holy Ghost**. . . Our greatest example of overcoming temptation is the Savior: "**He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them**" (D&C 20:22).

2. **Richard G. Scott**: "When you have taken a **determined stand for right**, when you have **established personal standards and made covenants to keep them**, when temptations come and you act according to your standards, you will be reinforced and given strength beyond your own capacity, if that is needed. **Difficulty comes when you enter the battle of temptation without a fixed plan**" ("Do What Is Right," Liahona, Mar. 2001, 14).

3. **One key to resisting temptation is consistent obedience**. If you give in sometimes, the temptation is harder to resist in the future. If you resist consistently, you get stronger and it is easier to resist in the future. Much of the strength to resist comes from the **Savior's Atonement** working in your life. As you do your best to learn the Savior's teachings and follow them, the Lord strengthens you to withstand temptation. (New Era, Questions and Answers, Dec. 2013).

4. **President Spencer W. Kimball**: "When I was a little boy ... I heard my teachers tell me over and over: 'We do not drink; we do not smoke; we do not drink tea or coffee; the Lord has proscribed that.' ... Then as I was out alone, milking the cows, or putting up the hay, I had time to think. I mulled it over in my mind and made this decision: 'I, Spencer Kimball, will never taste any form of liquor. I, Spencer Kimball, will never touch tobacco. I will never drink coffee, nor will I ever touch tea—not because I can explain why I shouldn't, except that the Lord said not to.' ... **I made up my mind**. That's the point I am trying to make. I made up my mind then, as a little boy: 'I will never touch those things.' And so, having made up my mind, it was easy to follow it, and **I did not yield**. There were many temptations that came along, but I did not even analyze it; I did not stop and measure it and say, 'Well, shall I or shall I not?' I always said to myself: 'But I made up my mind I would not. Therefore, I do not'" (C Report, Stockholm Sweden Area, 1974, 86).

5. **David O. McKay**: "**All good things require effort**. That which is worth having will cost part of your physical being, your intellectual power, and your soul power—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matt. 7:7.) **But you have to seek, you have to knock**. On the other hand ... evil seeks you, and it requires effort and fortitude to combat it. **But truth and wisdom are gained only by seeking, by prayer, and by effort**. (Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 144–45).

6. **THREE VOICES -- from *Journey to the Veil* by John Pontius**

John Pontius begins by explaining how to develop a greater understanding of revelation and how to receive it. He concentrates on the three voices that we must discern to draw closer to Christ and resist temptation.

(1) The Voice of Our Mind

There are three voices that a "healthy" mind hears. The first and loudest is the voice of our own mind. We hear ourselves think. We ask questions, debate, and doubt. We analyze the events of our lives and make decisions. **This voice is almost always unsure**. It wonders about everything and questions, "Why did that happen?", "What should I do now?", "What does that mean?", and "How could I be so dumb?" **This is all our own thinking and reasoning**. The easiest way to identify this voice is that it often references "me" and "I." For example, "I think I'm in trouble," is from your own mind. "I'm hungry" or "Why is this happening to me?" are similar ruminations of the human psyche.

(2) The Holy Spirit

The next voice we hear is from the Holy Spirit. In its earliest stages, this voice is called our conscience. **The most important fact here is that it is revelation, and it is the voice of Christ**. It always leads us to do something good and to believe in Christ. **It rarely asks questions**. It clearly distills a thought or pure concept into our minds or heart: "Don't do that." "Put it back." "Pick it up" "Go to church." "Help your wife with the dishes." "Be loving to your husband." "Play with your kids." The Holy Spirit has a single purpose in our lives, which is to constantly inform us of what is right and wrong and nudge us in the direction of truth and right.

Moroni 7: 15-16: For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night. **For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil**; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the **power and gift of Christ**; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

Moroni 7: 17-19: But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him. And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged. Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.

Everything that invites you to do good—including ideas for good that pop into your head—is inspired of God and is revelation. Choosing to be obedient to all such promptings will dramatically increase your spiritual strength and set you upon the ordained path to joy and upward spiritual mobility. Just as we continually hear the voice of temptation, **we also continually hear the voice of Christ**—at least unless we shut it off through disobedience.

Such promptings are rarely actual voices. Promptings are most often just thoughts or impressions that come into the heart and mind, sudden insights, usually when you least expect it. **But we can tell without a doubt that they come from Christ when they lead us to do something good**—even if that good thing is as mundane and annoying as a thought to drive the speed limit.

(3) The Voice of Evil

The final voice we hear as the voice of evil. **We are all quite familiar with temptations that most often appeal to the flesh, our pride, or our vanity.** They try to get us to go contrary to righteous promptings.

The evil ones certainly know the behaviors and weaknesses of mankind, and eventually they come to know and recognize us, our moods, emotions, and likely our intentions. As they systematically gather information about us and learn who we are, and what our strengths and weaknesses are here, they intelligently and logically persuade, fight, reason, and rant against anything good that the Lord wants for us. My experiences have led me to believe that Satan's minions, tempters, and messengers are hateful and angry and have very real intent to destroy us. What seems like a vague scuffle to us is an all-out war to them, and they fully intend to win. **Their goal is to get us to obey them, thus separating us from the voice of the Holy Spirit.**

An example of these three voices operating in our lives probably happened to a lot of us just last Fast Sunday. The voice of the **Holy Spirit** might have prompted you to bear your testimony. The **opposition**, keenly aware of what is going on, and knowing you and your weaknesses, would immediately counter with a barrage of clever arguments tailor-made for you: "You won't know what to say. It will be embarrassing. You will just start crying. Leave the time for other people. Nobody really cares about what you think anyway," and similar lies. **Your mind** then says, "Oh, my goodness, what should I do?"

When we are able to identify these three voices correctly, then **we don't need to ask ourselves what we "should" do because we "should" bear our testimony.** This is what Christ desires of us at that moment. The real question is, "Will I be obedient and bear my testimony?"

With this understanding of the three voices embedded in our souls, we are ready to employ the Small Plates to help us practice hearing and interpreting the voices in our own heads.

The Small Plates

- 1) **Go get a small notebook**, preferably one you can keep in your shirt pocket or purse.
- 2) Take a marker and **write on the cover, "The Small Plates of . . ." inserting your name.** Every time you receive a **prompting**, every time you hear a **temptation**, **write it down** in your small plates. Be a specific and detailed.
- 3) **Leave a blank space after each entry.**
- 4) **Go back at the end of the day and record whether you hearkened to that which was good, or if you succumbed to that which was evil.**
- 5) **Record the result of your decisions.** When you were faithful, what happened? Whose lives were changed? Were you happier because of your obedience? When you failed to obey, what were the consequences?
 - You will find that you receive dozens of "revelations" every day and that **your life is literally submerged in promptings.** You will see that in every decision, right or wrong, you know what you "should have" done.
 - You will also find that the voice of opposition is very informed, specific, and intelligent. **Your enemy is giving you hundreds of reasons to disobey** and satisfy some carnal desire or lust. You will know without a doubt that war that is being waged for your soul.

Keeping your small plates does not have to go on for a long period of time. It is an exercise designed to teach you the difference between the voices of revelation, evil, and your mind; you will be stunned by the volume of information received each day. **You will be delighted at how clearly Christ is leading you and amazed and dismayed at how thoroughly evil opposes any truth and all light.** You will see why Christ characterized us as walking in darkness at noonday and often lamented that He is a light, shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

D&C 88: 49-50: The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; nevertheless, the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in Him and by Him. Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am, and that **I am the true light that is in you, and that you are in me;** otherwise ye could not abound.

For those of you who take the initiative to try this experiment, I applaud you. When you discover the truth and power of being able to discern between the "three voices," you will have found new wings for your spiritual flight