
We hope faithful Latter-day Saints will not use the playing cards which are used for gambling, either with or without the gambling. As for the gambling, in connection with horse racing or games or sports, we firmly discourage such things. . . .

We are also concerned with the great waste from our homes and stores and restaurants and otherwise. After the usual banquet, enough is carried out in the garbage to feed numerous mouths that have been drooling for a bite to eat in less-favored countries. Many are starving, and we throw away much and waste much. . . .

We seem to shrink away from punishing of criminals or the disciplining even of children.

More than a million American women each year resort to illegitimate abortions. This is one of the most despicable of all sins—to destroy an unborn child to save one from embarrassment or to save one’s face or comfort. An estimated 8,000 women die every year from such consequences. . . .

One popular writer said: “Jesus Christ is not making a universal appeal today because of His moral austerity. Right down the line Christ gives offense by His moral austerity.” He rebukes our acquisitive society. He rebukes our comfort-loving, take-it-easy philosophy. He rebukes our moral laxity. He rebukes our reliance on force and our rejection of love and of the royal way of life. Ours is a comfort-loving society. We equate comfort with civilization. . . .

The number of parents who go astray astounds us. The numbers of divorces that were the result, in whole or part, of the infidelity bring us back to our basic theme as quoted in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery, . . . nor do anything like unto it.” (D&C 59:6) . . .

Let every youth keep himself from the compromising approaches and then with great control save himself from the degrading and life-damaging experience of sexual impurity. There must be an early and total and continuing repentance.

Every form of homosexuality is sin. Pornography is one of the approaches to that transgression. There is no halfway.

Some people are ignorant or vicious and apparently attempting to destroy the concept of masculinity and femininity. More and more girls dress, groom, and act like men. More and more men dress, groom, and act like women. The high purposes of life are dam-aged and destroyed by the growing unisex theory. God made man in his own image, male and female made he them. With relatively few accidents of nature, we are born male or female. The Lord knew best. Certainly, men and women who would change their sex status will answer to their Maker. . . .

The earth cannot justify nor continue its life without marriage and the family. Sex without marriage, for all people, young or older, is an abomination to the Lord, and it is most unfortunate that many people have blinded their eyes to these great truths. . . .

May we repeat: Sex perversions of men and women can never replenish the earth and are definitely sin without excuse, and rationalizations are very weak; God will not tolerate it.

As to abortions, we deplore the reported million unborn children who will lose their lives in this country this year. Certainly the women who yield to this ugly sin and the sin which often generated it, and those who assist them, should remember that retribution is sure. It is sure. . . .

We are aghast at the reports of young people going to surgery to limit their families and the reputed number of parents who encourage this vasectomy. Remember that the coming of the Lord approaches, and some difficult-to-answer questions will be asked by a divine Judge who will be hard to satisfy with silly explanations and rationalizations. He will judge justly, you may be sure. . . .

Will you listen? Will you follow the advice and counsel of your leaders, local and general? Or will you choose your own paths though they lead you into the dark wilderness? . . .

God is true. He is just. He is a righteous judge, but justice must come before sympathy and forgiveness and mercy. . . .

Those of us who break his commandments will regret and suffer in remorse and pain. God will not be mocked. Man has his free agency, it is sure, but remember, GOD WILL NOT BE MOCKED. (See D&C 63:58.)

President Heber J. Grant, Conference Reports, April 1926, pp. 10–11, (in Messages of the First Presidency 5:250. Introductory comments: “In issuing these statements against card playing and in support of the Deseret News, President Grant announced that in both instances he was “speaking for the Church” or in other words in his official capacity as President of the Church. President Grant indicated that repeated condemnation of card playing had been issued to members of the Church.”)

“What the Church Requests as to Card Playing. By the way, I hear that card playing is becoming very, very popular, and that the Church must be in favor of card-playing because the Church authorities never say anything about it. From the time I was a child and read the Juvenile Instructor, published for the benefit of the people, I have read nothing except condemnation of card playing and the wasting of your time in doing something that brings no good, bodily, intellectually or in any way, and sometimes leads your children to become gamblers, because they become expert card-players. The Church as a Church requests its members not to play cards. I hope you understand me, and I want you to know that I am speaking for the Church when I ask the people to let cards alone.”

Gospel Standards, p. 41. CARDS AND CARD-PLAYING. If you ever found people playing cards excessively that were getting any real, spiritual benefit out of it, I should like to have you bring them around and introduce them to me. I have never met any of that kind. Those that play their cards will say: “Oh, well, there is no particular harm. We
are not going to be so straight that we lean over backwards.” I don’t want anybody ever to lean over backwards, for fear they might fall over, but I would like everybody to stand up straight. — CS, July 3, 1937:5.

Conference Report, April 1929, p.131. I hope and pray that the saints will live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I hope that they will listen to the teachings of the presidents of stakes and bishops of wards. I want to say that we expect every president of a stake and every bishop of a ward to teach the people the truth. We want them to tell the people that they are expected to obey the Word of Wisdom, to be honest tithe-payers, to remember the covenants that they make in the temples of God, and not mutilate their garments: that we expect them to quit playing cards; and that we expect them to do their duty as saints, and to preach the Gospel by living it.


The Evil of Cards

But, you say, we must have recreation; what shall we do? Turn to domestic enterprises, and to the gaining of useful knowledge of the gospel. Let the love of reading good and useful books be implanted in the hearts of the young, let them be trained to take pleasure and recreation in history, travel, biography, conversation and classic story. Then there are innocent games, music, songs, and literary recreation. What would you think of the man who would argue for whisky and beer as a common beverage because it is necessary for people to drink? He is perhaps little worse than the man who would place cards in the hands of my children — whereby they would foster the spirit of chance and gambling leading down to destruction — because they must have recreation. I would call the first a vicious enemy, and refer him to water to drink; and the latter an evil spirit in the guise of innocence, and refer him to recreation containing no germs of spiritual disease leading to the devil!

Let our evenings be devoted to innocent amusements in the home, and let all chance games be banished from our families, and only recreation indulged in that is free from gambling and the gambling spirit. And let excessive card-playing, and the person who strolls about among neighbors at all hours of the night and day encouraging this evil, be put far from us. Just as sure as we encourage card-playing, we will find ourselves the recognition of a card-player to the exclusion of all spiritual and religious feeling. At any rate, we may be sure that the man who encourages card-playing will be listened to with far less interest than the man who opposes it. The latter an evil spirit in the guise of innocence, and refer him to the duties and responsibilities of a religious life. Such a practice would be looked upon as incompatible with the duties and responsibilities of a religious life. Even business men, as a rule, are distrustful of business associates whose inclinations engage them in frequent card playing.

Young people in their recreations should strive to form a love for that which will not be injurious. It is not true that only that recreation can be enjoyed that is detrimental to the body and spirit. We should train ourselves to find pleasure in that which invigorates, not stupefies and destroys the body; that which leads upward and not down; that which brightens, not dulls and stunts the intellect; that which elevates and exalts the spirit, not that clogs and depresses it. So shall we please the Lord, enhance our own enjoyment, and save ourselves and our children from impeding sins, at the root of which, like the evil genius, lurks the spirit of cards and gaming. — Improvement Era, Vol. 14, June, 1911, pp. 735-8.

It is no uncommon thing for women, young and middle-aged, to spend whole afternoons, and many of them, evenings as well, in playing cards, thus wasting hours and days of precious time in this useless and unprofitable way. Yet those same people, when approached, declare they have no time to spend as teachers in the Sabbath schools, and no time to attend either Sunday schools or meetings. Their church duties are neglected for lack of time, yet they spend hours, day after day, at cards. They have thereby encouraged and become possessed of a spirit of indolence, and their minds are filled with the vile drunkenness, hallucination, charm and fascination, that take possession of the habitual card-player to the exclusion of all spiritual and religious feeling. Such a spirit detracts from all sacred thought and sentiment. These players at length do not quite know whether they are Jews, Gentiles, or Saints, and they do not care a fig.

While a simple game of cards in itself may be harmless, it is a fact that by immoderate repetition it ends in an infatuation for chance schemes, in habits of excess, in waste of precious time, in dulling and stupor of the mind, and in the complete destruction of religious feeling. These are serious results, evils that should and must be avoided by the Latter-day Saints. Then again, there is the grave danger that lurks in persistent card playing, which begets the spirit of gambling, of speculation and that awakens the dangerous desire to get something for nothing. — Improvement Era, Vol. 6, August, 1903, p. 779.

Card Playing

One's character may be determined in some measure by the quality of one's amusements. Men and women of industrious, business-like, and thoughtful habits care little for frivolous pastimes, for pleasures that are sought for their own sake. It is not easy to imagine that leading men in the Church would find any pleasure that was either inspiring or helpful at the card table; indeed the announcement that a president of a stake, bishop of a ward, or other leading official of the Church was fond of card playing would be a shock to every sense of propriety even among young people who are not seriously inclined to the duties and responsibilities of life. Such a practice would be looked upon as incompatible with the duties and responsibilities of a religious life. Even business men, as a rule, are distrustful of business associates whose inclinations engage them in frequent card playing.

But it may be said that the same objections do not hold good in respect to young people who do not take life so seriously; but the evil is that young people who indulge in the frivolous and vicious pastime of card playing are never likely to take life seriously unless they forsake such questionable pleasures early in life. It is the serious and thoughtful man and woman who are most likely to assume the higher and nobler responsibilities of life, and their tastes and pleasures are never satisfied by means of a deck of cards.

Card playing is an excessive pleasure; it is intoxicating and, therefore, in the nature of a vice. It is generally the companion of the cigarette and the wine glass, and the latter lead to the poolroom and gambling hall. Few men and women indulge in the dangerous pastime of the card table without compromising their business affairs and the higher responsibilities of life. Tell me what amusements
you like best and whether your amusements have become a ruling passion in your life, and I will tell you what you are. Few indulge frequently in card playing in whose lives it does not become a ruling passion.

Cards are the most perfect and common instrumentalities of the gambler that have been devised, and the companionship of cards, unlike the companionship of most other games, is that of the gambling den and the saloon. But cards do not stand alone in their enticement to evil. Any game that ultimately leads to questionable society, because it is the chief pleasure of such society, should be excluded from the home. There are innocent games enough to satisfy the required pleasures of the home without encouraging card playing. — *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 38, September 1, 1903, p. 529.

Stop Card Playing

I am told that the prevalence of card parties in the homes of the Latter-day Saints is much greater than is supposed by those whom society people never think of inviting to make the card table the source of an evening’s pastime. The presiding authorities are not invited to the card parties, and, as a rule, are not permitted to witness them, simply because those who give such parties feel that a deck of cards in the hands of a faithful servant of God is a satire upon religion.

I have heard that some who are called to officiate in holy ordinances have, when absent from the House of the Lord, or when tardy in arriving, excused themselves because of the time occupied in giving or attending a card party. Those who thus indulge are not fit to administer in sacred ordinances. They are no more worthy than others who violate good morals in any respect. They should be excused.

I am told that young people offer as an excuse for such questionable pastime the accusation that cards are played in the homes of certain leading men in the Church. Bishops, however, ought never to be deterred in their efforts to suppress the evil by counter complaints of this kind. The bishop has the same right to inquire, through the means of his teachers, into the pleasures of the homes of the highest authorities of the Church as he has into those of its most humble members. If it be true that card playing is prevalent in the Church, the bishops are charged with the responsibility for the evil and it is their duty to see that it is abolished, or that men and women who encourage it be brought to account before their brethren and sisters for the pernicious example they are setting before the youth of Zion. Certainly no bishop can report his ward in good condition where such a practice prevails.

Presidents of stakes are not without their responsibility in this matter, and at the general priesthood meetings of the stakes they should make searching inquiry of the bishops concerning card parties in the homes of the Saints. It is an easy matter for every bishop to know through the medium of the ward teachers, whether there are any practices in the homes of the people inconsistent with the mission of “Mormonism,” and card playing is certainly inconsistent with that mission. No man who is addicted to card playing should be called to act as a ward teacher, such men cannot be consistent advocates of that which they do not themselves practice.

The card table has been the scene of too many quarrels, the birthplace of too many hatreds, the occasion of too many murders to admit one word of justification for the lying, cheating spirit which it too often engenders in the hearts of its devotees.

My frequent and emphatic expressions on this subject are the result of the alarm I have felt over the well founded reports that have come to me concerning the prevalence of card playing in the homes of some who profess to be Latter-day Saints. Upon every officer in the Church responsible in any way for the dangers of the card table is placed, and placed heavily, the duty of doing all that he or she possibly can in prayerful and earnest manner to eradicate the evil. Let us be fully conscious of the old adage which says that “The devil likes to sow whatever is wet,” and stop card playing in the home before it reaches the gambler’s table. — *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 38, Sept. 15, 1903, p. 561.

Pernicious Nature of Card Playing

Card playing is a game of chance, and because it is a game of chance it has its tricks. It encourages tricks; its devotees measure their success at the table by their ability through devious and dark ways to win. It creates a spirit of cunning and devises hidden and secret means, and cheating at cards is almost synonymous with playing at cards.

Again, cards have a bad reputation and they are the known companions of bad men. If no other reason existed for shunning the card table, its reputation alone should serve as a warning. It may be conceded that superb skill is often acquired in this game of chance, but this skill itself endangers the moral qualities of the possessor and leads him on to questionable practices.

Such games as checkers and chess are games more of fixed rules whose application are open and freer from cunning devices. Such games do not intoxicate like cards and other games of chance. — *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 38, October 1, 1903, p. 591.

But if cards are played in the home and under the eye of an anxious and loving parent, what harm can come from it all? is asked. Most vices in the beginning take on attractive and innocent appearing garbs, and a careful examination of the career of many an unfortunate man will reveal the first step of his misfortune in some “innocent pastime” whose vice rarely manifests itself in its infancy. There are different spirits in the world and the gambling spirit is one of them, and cards have been from time immemorial the most common and universal means of gratifying that spirit. An “innocent game of cards” is the innocent companion of an innocent glass of wine and the playmate of tricksters.

Again, all amusements become pernicious when pursued excessively. No game in the world has been played a thousandth part of the time, aye all the games in the world have not consumed a thousandth part of the time, that cards have taken. The game itself leads to excessiveness; it is the enemy of industry; it is the foe of economy and the boon companion of the Sabbath-breaker. The best possible excuse that any one can render for playing cards is that there is a possible escape from the dangers to which it leads; and the best explanation that people can give for such a vice is the adventurous spirit of man that delights
in that which is hazardous to his physical and moral safety. — *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 38, Oct. 1, 1903, p. 593.

**Joseph Fielding Smith Jr.** *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:204. Children should be encouraged in the home to read and be instructed in the value of good books and how to discriminate between the good and the bad in literature. It is far better for a home to be thus provided where the children can be entertained with a good, wholesome story than to more than waste their time playing cards — a habit that cannot too severely be condemned — or spending their time in poohpahs or upon the streets in company of evil associates. . . .

*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:303–307. CHURCH OFFICIALLY CONDEMNS CARD PLAYING. We have been taught all the days of our lives that card playing is not good and is contrary to the order and discipline of the Church. The authorities have called upon the people, and it is published in our magazines, to refrain from this evil indulgence. Notwithstanding all this, we find among us some who look upon card playing as a very harmless pastime. It is not harmless, but very harmful. It shows a lack of obedience to the counsels of the Lord on the part of members who indulge in this evil, and if nothing more could be said of it, it is at least a most pernicious waste of time that could be employed in some better occupation.

GAMBLING: AN EVIL DISEASE. Nothing good comes out of card games or games of chance. There are numerous ways in which we may obtain wholesome amusement and recreation which is beneficial to both body and mind. In games where cards are used, usually “stakes” are played for, and betting is done. Someone will obtain the “stakes,” but no one really wins, for the one who obtains the “stakes” has lost part of his manhood which is difficult to regain.

There seems to be an urge in human nature which leads many men and women to seek to obtain something for nothing, and many have risked their hard earned sustenance on the altar of chance, hoping to win a fortune which they have not earned. There is a lure in all games of chance which Satan places before them, and in their greed or selfish desire for gain they take the uncertain bait far less innocently than does a fish which grabs the angler’s hook.

The regular standard *playing cards* are used in gambling games. They are found in questionable resorts and gambling dens. Young people who have learned to play the games in their own homes or at card clubs with innocent intent too frequently are lured into questionable places where gambling prevails. Such games of chance are usually associated with cigarettes and beer, and those who indulge in cards acquire also the tobacco and drinking evils.

*Card playing becomes a habit just as much as smoking and drinking.* I remember a neighbor of mine who in his earlier days was addicted to gambling. Later in his life he repented and joined the Church. One day before a group of which I was a member, he emphatically impressed upon our minds the fact that gambling is a disease which fastens itself so tenaciously upon those who indulge that they seldom quit. Its influence upon character is just the same as the use of tobacco and strong drink. He advised all to shun all card playing and games of chance lest the habit would destroy them.

**BRIGHAM YOUNG COUNSEL AGAINST CARD PLAYING.** Card playing and all other games of chance should be avoided as the gate of destruction. All such practices have been discredited by the authorities of the Church from the beginning of our history. When the Mormon Battalion was called into the service of the country, President Brigham Young addressed the volunteers and said that he wished them to prove themselves to be the best soldiers in the service of the United States. He admonished the captains to be fathers to the men in their companies and to manage the officers and men by the power of the priesthood. They should keep themselves clean, teach chastity and gentility. There was to be no swearing, and no man was to be insulted. They were to avoid contention with Missourians — their enemies — and all other persons. They were to take their Bibles and copies of the Book of Mormon with them and study them but not impose their beliefs on others. They were to avoid card playing, and if they had cards with them, they were to burn them. If they would follow this instruction, he promised them that they would not be called on to shed the blood of their fellow men.

**JOSEPH F. SMITH CONDEMNS CARD PLAYING.** President Joseph F. Smith has given this wholesome advice: “While a simple game of cards in itself may be harmless, it is a fact that by immediate repetition it ends in an infatuation for chance schemes, in habits of excess, and often the loss of hard earned money. Especially is this true in the case of those who neglect labor, and have no business. This is a case where one is driven to the gaming table, and there he acquires a love for chance, and often becomes a habitual gambler. To-day he gambles for nothing, and to-morrow for very large sums of money. This leads to the robbing of a fellow man, the gambling hall. Few men and women indulge in the dangerous pastime of the card table without compromising their business affairs and the higher responsibilities of life. Tell me what amusements you like best and whether your amusements have been a ruling passion in your life, and I will tell you what you are. Few indulge frequently in card playing in whose lives it does not become a ruling passion.”

**MAN ACCOUNTABLE TO LORD FOR IDLE WORDS AND ACTS . . .** This does not mean that the Lord frowns on innocent amusement and the time spent in wholesome games. The human body needs relaxation, and this can be obtained in a legitimate way. For this purpose, in part, the Mutual Improvement Associations have been organized where proper forms of amusement and entertainment may be taught, and thereby the body strengthened and the mind quickened and developed.

*Answers to Gospel Questions*, Vol.1, p.192–194. Question: “For some time I have had a very serious question on my mind. It is in regard to the *playing of card games*. Is it a sin to play cards or join card clubs? I am a returned missionary and have thought that there was
nothing but evil coming from playing card games and joining card clubs. Some of my friends think I am very foolish in holding such a belief, but still I do not wish to join them in doing such a thing if it is considered wrong and not approved by the Church."

**Answer:** *Nothing good comes out of card games or games of chance.* There are numerous ways in which we may obtain wholesome amusement and recreation which is beneficial to both body and mind. In games where cards are used usually "stakes" are played for, and betting is done. Someone will obtain the "stakes," but no one really wins, for the one who obtains the "stakes" has lost part of his manhood which is difficult to regain. There seems to be an urge in human nature which leads many men and women to seek to obtain something for nothing, and many have risked their hard-earned substance on the altar of chance, hoping to win a fortune which they have not earned. There is a lure in all games of chance which Satan has before them, and in their greed or selfish desire for gain they take the uncertain bait far less innocently than does a fish which grabs the angler's hook.

The regular standard playing cards are used in gambling games. They are found in questionable resorts and gambling dens. Young people who have learned to play the games in their own homes or at card clubs with innocent intent too frequently are lured into questionable places where gambling prevails. Such games of chance are usually associated with cigarettes [sic] and beer and those who indulge in cards acquire also the tobacco and drinking evils. *Card playing becomes a habit* just as much as smoking and drinking. I remember a neighbor of mine who in his earlier days was addicted to gambling. Later in his life he repented and joined the Church. One day before a group of which I was a member, he emphatically impressed upon our minds the fact that gambling is a disease which fastens itself upon those who indulge so tenaciously that they seldom quit. Its influence upon character is just the same as the use of tobacco and strong drink. He advised all to shun all card playing and games of chance lest the habit would destroy them.

**Bishop Robert L. Simpson,** of the Presiding Bishopric, Conference Report, April 1969, p.86. Let me tell you about a sister who became literally hypnotized by a *deck of playing cards.* Eventually, there were not enough hours in the week to fit everything in. Her keen spiritual sensitivity became dulled, and it was easy for the cunning one to help her decide to give up an important Relief Society calling and abandon her wonderful circle of former associates in favor of the nonessential, time-wasting pastime that had captured her fancy. Sisters in the ward continuing their lives of charity and compassionate service are now termed by her as narrow-minded, as hypocritical and do-gooders, but in reality, the only thing that changed was this woman.

**Wilford Woodruff,** Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff — His Life and Labors,* pp.290–291. Next morning President Young called the camp together and required each captain separately to call out his men and when all were present, except two who had gone out hunting, he addressed them in something like the following words:

"I think I will take as my text to preach my sermon from. I am about to revolt from traveling with this camp any further with the spirit they now possess. I had rather risk myself among the savages with ten men who are men of faith, men of mighty prayer, men of God, than to be with the whole camp when they forget the Lord and turn their hearts to folly and wickedness. Yes, I would rather be alone and I am now resolved not to go any farther with the camp unless you will consent to humble yourselves before the Lord and serve Him and cease your folly and wickedness. For a week past, nearly the whole camp has been *card playing, and checkers and dominoes* have occupied the attention of the brethren, and dancing has been going on continually.

"Now it is time to quit it. There have been trials and lawsuits upon every nonsensical thing; and if this is suffered to go on, it will be but a short time before you are fighting, knocking each other down and taking life. It is time it was stopped.

"I do not want to hear any more such reports as I heard last Sunday of men going to meeting and preaching to the rest after *playing cards* until meeting time. You are a pretty set of men going to look out a location among the mountains for a resting place for the Saints — even the whole Church of God — who have been driven out from the Gentiles and rejected of them. And after you have established a location, you are then going out to preach the Gospel, seal salvation upon the house of Israel, and gather the nations.

"How would you look if they should know your conduct and ask you what you did when you went to seek out Zion and find a resting place for the Saints where the standard of the Kingdom of God could be reared and her banners unfurled for the nations to gather unto?

"Did you spend a good deal of your time in dancing, pitching quoits, jumping, wrestling, and the like? Yes, yes. Did you play cards, dice, checkers, and dominoes? O, yes. What could you do with yourselves? Why would you shrink from the glance of the eyes of God, angels and men—even wicked men. Then are you not ashamed of yourselves for practicing these things? Yes, you are, and you must quit it." ..."