Leisure Time

James E. Faust

William M. Allred, one of his followers, stated that some straightlaced people had problems with the Prophet Joseph playing ball with the boys. Said Allred, referring to the Prophet:

“He then related a story of a certain prophet who was sitting under the shade of a tree amusing himself in some way, when a hunter came along with his bow and arrow, and reproved him. The prophet asked him if he kept his bow strung up all the time. The hunter answered that he did not. The prophet asked why, and he said it would lose its elasticity if he did. The prophet said it was just so with his mind, he did not want it strung up all the time.”

(Juvenile Instructor, 1 Aug. 1892, p. 472.) [“The Magnificent Vision Near Palmyra,” Ensign, May 1984, p. 68]

Proper Mix of Work and Leisure is Necessary

Joseph F. Smith

Carefully select your occupation with a view to your qualifications or adaptability therefor; let it be worthy of the noblest ambition and purest desire, and then engage in it in earnest, put your heart into it, and your mind upon it, with due consideration to other essential things, until you succeed. All extremes should be avoided. To fix the heart and mind upon a single object, however good, and close the eyes to all else in life, may make an expert, a bigot, or a crank, but never a wise and broad-minded man. It is foolish to become too much absorbed in material things. Labor and relaxation should go hand in hand, and pure and undefiled religion will lighten every burden you have to bear, and help to sweeten the bitter draught of many a sorrowing soul. The proper admixture of labor and leisure will not only promote the highest mental capabilities, but also the most perfect physical conditions. (Gospel Doctrine, p.268)

“We Do Not Know a Man until We Know How He Spends His Leisure”

Eldred G. Smith

It’s a lot like the city boy who went to work on the farm. He was sorting potatoes when someone asked him how he liked working on the farm. He said, “I like the work all right, but these decisions get me down.” It is said that the character can be measured by what one does in his leisure time. That’s when he alone makes his own decisions. (“Decision,” Ensign, May 1978, p. 29)

John H. Vandenberg

“Lin Yutang, the famous Chinese philosopher, has written: ‘We do not know a nation until we know its pleasures of life, just as we do not know a man until we know how he spends his leisure. It is when a man ceases to do the things he has to do, and does the things he likes to do, that the character is revealed. It is when the repressions of society and business are gone and when the goads of money and fame and ambition are lifted, and a man’s spirit wanders where it listeth, that we see the inner man, his real self.’ “

Then he continued: “Have you ever thought much about that? Your leisure gives you away. I used to know a man who was head of a very large commercial empire. Beginning with nothing but ambition, he became a multimillionaire and, finally, retired as head of his far-flung company. He bought a large and magnificent yacht with which to cruise the world. And do you know what he did with his free time? He read salacious paperbacks and got falling-down drunk and had to be carried to bed, unconscious, every night. He’s dead now. His leisure gave him away. There was nothing there … just nothing at all. He was a one idea man. Once he was away from that idea, he was a lost child in the wilderness. He didn’t enjoy his yacht … travel meant nothing to him. He was a pitiful, unhappy cypher. Not because he was rich … there are thousands, millions just like him in every walk of life. It was just that his millions, which gave him access to the whole world, were worthless to him and accentuated his nothingness.”

Then the commentator asked the question: “What do
you do with your leisure time? It’s a good idea to examine carefully this important segment of your life. It exposes the real person—but not the finished person. We can change. . . .” (Earl Nightingale, “Our Changing World,” No. 2459. Used by permission.) . . . As to the effective use of our leisure time, we have, in the gospel, unnumbered opportunities. As one acquires knowledge of the gospel principles and pursues his course, he can successfully apply those principles to his individual circumstances, whether his position be one of great or meager possessions; whether it be early in life, during his economic production period, or in retirement. The gospel is meant to temper life and to bring it into true balance and fruition.

The Lord has decreed that “the Church hath need of every member.” (See D&C 84:110.) This implies development of its members by participation in the programmed activities of children and youth, filling the numerous teaching opportunities, administration assignments, fulfillment of member duties, the fulfillment of priesthood duties, not forgetting to visit the homes of members (which, until this day, has not been attended to as the Lord directed), searching out the records of ancestors, and temple participation, all of which are only part of the never-ending list of activities with which to fill our leisure hours. (“Becoming a Somebody,” Ensign, Jan. 1973, pp. 38-39)

Gordon B. Hinckley

At Brigham Young University we have had some great athletic coaches. We have them now and we have had them in the past. One of these of long ago was Eugene L. Roberts. He grew up in Provo and drifted aimlessly with the wrong kind of friends. Then something remarkable happened. I read you his own words. He wrote:

“Several years ago when Provo City was scarred with unsightly saloons and other questionable forms of amusement, I was standing one evening on the street, waiting for my gang to show up, when I noticed that the [Provo] tabernacle was lighted up and that a large crowd was moving in that direction. I had nothing to do so I drifted over there and went in. I thought I might find some of my gang, or at least some of the girls that I was interested in. Upon entering, I ran across three or four of the fellows and we placed ourselves under the gallery where there was a crowd of young ladies, who seemed to promise entertainment. We were not interested in what came from the pulpit. We knew that the people on the rostrum were all old fogies. They didn’t know anything about life, and they certainly couldn’t tell us anything, for we knew it all. So we settled down to have a good time. Right in the midst of our disturbance there thundered from the pulpit the following [statement]:

“You can’t tell the character of an individual by the way he does his daily work. Watch him when his work is done. See where he goes. Note the companions he seeks, and the things he does when he may do as he pleases. Then you can tell his true character.’

“I looked up toward the rostrum,” Roberts continued, “because I was struck with this powerful statement. I saw there a slim, dark-haired fierce-eyed fighting-man whom I knew and feared; but didn’t have any particular love for.”

As he continued, “[The speaker] went on to make a comparison. He said: ‘Let us take the eagle, for example. This bird works as hard and as efficiently as any other animal or bird in doing its daily work. It provides for itself and its young by the sweat of its brow, so to speak; but when its daily work is over and the eagle has time of its own to do just as it pleases, note how it spends its recreational moments. It flies in the highest realms of heaven, spreads its wings and bathes in the upper air, for it loves the pure, clean atmosphere and the lofty heights.

‘On the other hand, let us consider the hog. This animal grunts and grubs and provides for its young just as well as the eagle; but when its working hours are over and it has some recreational moments, observe where it goes and what it does. The hog will seek out the muddiest hole in the pasture and will roll and soak itself in filth, for this is the thing it loves. People can be either eagles or hogs in their leisure time.’

“Now when I heard this short speech,” said Gene Roberts, “I was dumbfounded. I turned to my companions abashed for I was ashamed to be caught listening. What was my surprise to find everyone of the gang with his attention fixed upon the speaker and his eyes containing a far-away expression.

“We went out of the tabernacle that evening rather quiet and we separated from each other unusually early. I thought of that speech all the way home. I classified myself immediately as of the hog
family. I thought of that speech for years. That night there was implanted within me the faintest beginnings of ambition to lift myself out of the hog group and to rise to that of the eagle. …

“There was instilled within me that same evening, the urge to help fill up the mud holes in the social pasture so that those people with hog tendencies would find it difficult to wallow in recreational filth. As a result of constant thinking about that speech, I was stirred to devote my whole life and my profession toward developing wholesome recreational activities for the young people, so that it would be natural and easy for them to indulge in the eagle-type of leisure.

“The man who made that speech which affected my life more than any other speech I ever heard, was President George H. Brimhall. May God bless him!” (Raymond Brimhall Holbrook and Esther Hamilton Holbrook, The Tall Pine Tree, n.p., 1988, pp. 111–13).

That simple story, told by a great teacher, turned around the life of a drifter and made of him an able and gifted leader. I repeat it tonight because I think that most of us are constantly faced with a choice of whether we wallow in the mire or fly to lofty heights.

What we do in our leisure time can make such a tremendous difference. Pity the poor man or boy of low purpose and weak ambition who, after a day of work, finishes his evening meal and then turns to the television screen for the rest of the evening to watch pornographic videotapes or sleazy late-night programs. Can you think of any picture which more nearly approaches President Brimhall’s description of the hog that seeks the mudhole in the pasture and wallows in the mire?

There is a better way, my brethren. Do you want to drop the ball in your lives? Do you wish to help Satan score? There is no surer way than to become engulfed in the tide of pornography that is sweeping over us. If we succumb to it, it destroys us, body and mind and soul. (“Don’t Drop the Ball,” Ensign, Nov. 1994, pp. 47–48)

Jesus also taught us how important it is to use our time wisely. This does not mean there can never be any leisure, for there must be time for contemplation and for renewal, but there must be no waste of time. How we manage time matters so very much, and we can be good managers of time without being frantic or officious. Time cannot be recycled. When a moment has gone, it is really gone. The tyranny of trivia consists of its driving out the people and moments that really matter. Minutia holds momentous things hostage, and we let the tyranny continue all too often. Wise time management is really the wise management of ourselves. (“Jesus: The Perfect Leader,” Ensign, Aug. 1979, p. 6)

**How We Use Our Leisure Time is Important to Our Joy**

**J. Richard Clarke**

Now, what about our leisure time? How we use our leisure is equally as important to our joy as our occupational pursuits. Proper use of leisure requires discriminating judgment. Our leisure provides opportunity for renewal of spirit, mind, and body. It is a time for worship, for family, for service, for study, for wholesome recreation. It brings harmony into our life.

Leisure is not idleness. The Lord condemns idleness. He said, “Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent” (D&C 60:13.) Idleness in any form produces boredom, conflict, and unhappiness. It creates a vacancy of worth, a seedbed for mischief and evil. It is the enemy of progress and salvation. (“The Value of Work,” Ensign, May 1982, p. 78)

**Leisure Time Must Be Directed to Wholesome Pursuits**

**Ezra Taft Benson**

Children must be taught to work at home. They should learn there that honest labor develops dignity and self-respect. They should learn the pleasure of work, of doing a job well.

The leisure time of children must be constructively directed to wholesome, positive pursuits. Too much television viewing can be destructive.

Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for discussions of gospel principles, recreation, work projects, skits, songs around the piano, games, special refreshments, and family
prayers. Like iron links in a chain, this practice will bind
a family together, in love, pride, tradition, strength, and
loyalty. (“Salvation—A Family Affair,” Ensign, July 1992, p. 4)

Gain Knowledge in Leisure Time

Spencer W. Kimball

Read in spare time. Numerous leisure hours have
been made available to men. It is noticeable that many
use these extra hours for fun and pleasure. Certainly an
increased part of it could profitably be used for gaining
knowledge and culture through the reading of good
books.

Numerous people fail to take advantage of these
opportunities. Many people spend hours in planes with
only cursory glancing at magazines, and in the train or
bus, time is spent “sitting and thinking,” and in many
cases, “just sitting,” when there could be such a
constructive program of reading. People in beauty
parlors, professional offices, waiting rooms, and
elsewhere waste precious hours thumbing through
outdated magazines when much valuable reading could
be done in these islands of time... Even in the beginning
there was the written word, for Adam and Eve were
conscious of the need for the development of the mind,
“And by them their children were taught to read and
write, having a language which was pure and undefiled.”
(Moses 6:6.) [The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball,
p.383]

Read Scriptures in Leisure Moments

Marvin J. Ashton

Next, I challenge every Latter-day Saint to come to
a knowledge and an understanding of the scriptures.
These sacred books are our bulwark of defense against a
cunning adversary. Each person should own and use his
personal copies of the scriptures. Take them to meetings
and classes. Read them in leisure moments. Develop a
careful plan of study and meditation. Take them on trips
as well. (“Rated A,” Ensign, Nov. 1977, p. 73)

It Is Easy for Leisure to Turn into Laziness

Spencer W. Kimball

How can one see the slackening of traditional moral
standards and not notice the decline in decency? As a
boy I saw how all, young and old, worked and worked
hard. We knew that we were taming the Arizona desert.

But had I been wiser then, I would have realized that we
were taming ourselves, too. Honest toil in subduing
sagebrush, taming deserts, channeling rivers, helps to
take the wilderness out of man’s environment but also out
of him. The disdain for work among some today may
merely signal the return of harshness and
wildness—perhaps not to our landscape but to some
people. The dignity and self-esteem that honest work
produces are essential to happiness. It is so easy for
leisure to turn into laziness. (“Listen to the Prophets,”
Ensign, May 1978, p. 78)

To Much Leisure Time Will Lead To
Boredom and the Want of More Expensive Things

Spencer W. Kimball

We believe in work for ourselves and for our
children. We go to the welfare projects, and there we
contribute work hours to meet our production needs. We
should train our children to work, and they should learn
to share the responsibilities of the home and the yard.
They should be given assignments to keep the house neat
and clean, even though it be humble. Children may be
given assignments also to take care of the garden, and
this will be far better than to have them for long hours
sitting at a television.

Someone has said, “Nobody ever lost his shirt when
his sleeves were rolled up.”

Too much leisure for children leaves them in a state
of boredom, and it is natural for them to want more and
more of the expensive things for their recreation. We
must bring dignity to labor in sharing the responsibilities
of the home and the yard. (“The Stone Cut without
Hands,” Ensign, May 1976, p. 5)

Too Much Leisure is Dangerous

David O. McKay

Learn to like your work. Learn to say, “This is my
work, my glory, not my doom.” God has blessed us with
the privilege of working. When he said, “Earn thy bread
by the sweat of thy brow,” he gave us a blessing. Men
and women have accepted it. Too much leisure is
dangerous. Work is a divine gift. (Gospel Ideals, p.497)

Beware of Idleness

Neal A. Maxwell

Idleness is risky! Though we crave it and sometimes
confuse it with leisure, idleness is different from the serenity of the soul brought by the promised peace of the Spirit. (John 14:27.) Here’s something from Nephi and from the Doctrine and Covenants: “Because of their cursing which was upon them they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey.” (2 Nephi 5:24.) “Behold, they have been sent to preach my gospel among the congregations of the wicked; wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, thus: Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known.” (D&C 60:13.) [We Talk of Christ, p.118]

Secularism Esteems Leisure Higher Than Work

Neal A. Maxwell

Even so, secularism simply seems to assign a higher value to leisure. Though we all need some leisure, secularism often finds itself trying to reduce the necessity for work without showing corresponding concern as to the purposes to which leisure time should be put—except more idleness or pleasure-seeking. Once it is taken, however, a first step toward hedonism compels a second step, and then a third, and so on. (“Eternalism vs. Secularism,” Ensign, Oct. 1974, p. 70)

The Romans Demanded More Leisure Time

Neal A. Maxwell

Though parallels between periods of time are seldom perfect, history is not really as silent as we are

Recreation

Recreation is Necessary

Ezra Taft Benson

• The condition of the physical body can affect the spirit. That’s why the Lord gave us the Word of Wisdom. He also said that we should retire to our beds early and arise early (see D&C 88:124), that we should not run faster than we have strength (see D&C 10:4), and that we should use moderation in all good things. In general, the more food we eat in its natural state—without additives—and the less it is refined, the healthier it will be for us. Food can affect the mind, and deficiencies of certain elements in the body can promote mental depression. A good physical examination periodically is a safeguard and sometimes deaf. This last summer and its happenings can be better understood if we look back – beyond Buchenwald and more distantly than Dachau – to Rome, of which Will Durant wrote:

“The virile character that had been formed by arduous simplicities and a supporting faith relaxed in the sunshine of wealth and the freedom of unbelief; men had now, in the middle and upper classes, the means to yield to temptation, and only expediency to restrain them. Urban congestion multiplied contacts and frustrated surveillance; immigration brought together a hundred cultures whose differences rubbed themselves out into indifference. Moral and esthetic standards were lowered by the magnetism of the mass; and sex ran riot in freedom while political liberty decayed.”

And of the same Rome, Aaron Stern wrote:

“The Roman Empire provides a richly detailed description of the decline of a great society. The symptoms of its fall centered around a critical schism between the older and younger generations. It was reflected among the young by an increase in drug usage, by a growing experimentation in homosexuality and bi-sexuality, and, perhaps most symptomatic of all, by a strident demand for more leisure that was accompanied by an unwillingness to accept responsibility for government, family, and other institutions.” (We Will Prove Them Herewith, p.93)

• Man needs beneficial recreation, a change of pace that refreshes him for heavy tasks ahead. Man also must take time to meditate, to sweep the cobwebs from his mind so that he might get a more firm grip on the truth and spend less time chasing phantoms and dallying in projects of lesser worth. Clean hearts and healthful food, exercise, early sleep and fresh air, wholesome recreation, and meditation,
combined with optimism that comes from fighting for the right and knowing you will eventually win for keeps -- this is the tonic every patriot needs and deserves. (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.480)

**Brigham Young**

Our work, our every-day labor, our whole lives are within the scope of our religion. This is what we believe and what we try to practice. Yet the Lord permits a great many things that he never commands. I have frequently heard my old brethren in the Christian world make remarks about the impropriety of indulging in pastimes and amusements. The Lord never commanded me to dance, yet I have danced; you all know it, for my life is before the world. Yet while the Lord has never commanded me to do it, he has permitted it. I do not know that he ever commanded the boys to go and play at ball, yet he permits it. I am not aware that he ever commanded us to build a theater, but he has permitted it, and I can give the reason why. Recreation and diversion are as necessary to our well-being as the more serious pursuits of life. There is not a man in the world but what, if kept at any one branch of business or study, will become like a machine. Our pursuits should be so diversified as to develop every trait of character and diversity of talent. (Discourses of Brigham Young, pp.238-239)

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

In one of the darkest hours in the history of the Church, when the weary members were crossing the plains having been driven from their homes, the Lord through President Brigham Young said to them: “If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful.”

The Prophet Joseph Smith engaged in manly sports on the few occasions that came to him. President Brigham Young and his brethren built the Salt Lake Theatre and the Social Hall. The drama, the dance, and other entertainments were given to the members of the Church, and by this means they were edified and strengthened; all such entertainments were opened and closed with prayer. The auxiliary organizations encourage athletic contests and sports under proper supervision and regulations. Our people are encouraged, not curtailed, in every kind of needful recreation and amusement; but all things which the world seeks, leading to evil, such as card playing, raffling, and indulging in playing machines of chance, are frowned upon as destructive of morals and abiding faith in that which is just and true. (Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.3, p.307)

**Take Time For Recreation**

**Thomas S. Monson**

Our house is to be a house of order. “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven,” advised Ecclesiastes, the Preacher. Such is true in our lives. Let us provide time for family, time for work, time for study, time for service, time for recreation, time for self—but above all, time for Christ. (“Building Your Eternal Home,” Ensign, Oct. 1999, p. 5)

**Recreation Necessary For Equilibrium**

**Brigham Young**

We are now enjoying our pastimes. We often meet together and worship the Lord by singing, praying, and preaching, fasting, and communing with each other in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Now we are met in the capacity of a social community -- for what? That our minds may rest, and our bodies receive that recreation which is proper and necessary to keep up an equilibrium, to promote healthy action to the whole system. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.240)

**Recreation is Not Wrong**

**Brigham Young**

Is there anything immoral in recreation? If I see my sons and daughters enjoying themselves, chatting, visiting, riding, going to a party or a dance, is there anything immoral in that? I watch very closely, and if I hear a word, see a look, or a sneer at divine things or anything derogatory to a good moral character, I feel it in a moment, and I say, “If you follow that it will not lead to good, it is evil; it will not lead to the fountain of life and intelligence; follow, only, the path that leads to life everlasting.”

It is the privilege of the Saints to enjoy every good thing, for the earth and its fulness belong to the Lord, and he has promised all to his faithful Saints; but it must he enjoyed without spirit of covetousness and selfishness -- without the spirit of lust, and in the spirit of the Gospel; then the sun will shine sweetly upon us; each day will be filled with delight, and all things will be filled with beauty, giving joy, pleasure, and rest to the Saints.
Must Be a Proper Balance of Recreation and Spirituality

M. Russell Ballard

In a materialistic age, when recreation and convenience are the suggested priorities of our society, we might all well ask ourselves, “How well are we providing for the spiritual well-being and strengthening of our families?” Are we clothing family members with “garments of salvation” as anxiously as we provide clothing for their wardrobe? Is our diet of entertainment and recreation balanced with the food offered by Him who said, “Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely.” (Alma 5:34.) (“Resources for Teaching Our Families,” Ensign, Feb. 1983, p. 10)

Must Be Proper Balance of Work and Recreation

Brigham Young

Prepare to die, is not the exhortation in this Church and Kingdom; but prepare to live is the word with us, and improve all we can in the life hereafter, wherein we may enjoy a more exalted condition of intelligence, wisdom, light, knowledge, power, glory, and exaltation. Then let us seek to extend the present life to the uttermost, by observing every law of health, and by properly balancing labor, study, rest, and recreation, and thus prepare for a better life. Let us teach these principles to our children, that, in the morning of their days, they may be taught to lay the foundation of health and strength and constitution and power of life in their bodies. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.186)

Boyd K. Packer

I can see parents grateful indeed to have a better balance with activities on Saturdays. Saturday activities can be scheduled to allow our youth to have their activities but on occasion to be home on some Saturdays to be taught how to work, to help, to learn to find recreation in the family setting. And the moms and dads who have obediently left home to oversee Church activities can find more time with their own children. (“Teach Them Correct Principles,” Ensign, May 1990, p.90)

David O. McKay

I wish to emphasize the fact that our homes should be more attractive and that more of our amusements should be in the home instead of out on the streets. (Gospel Ideals, pp.485-486)

Successful Families Enjoy Recreation Together

Ezra Taft Benson

- Successful families do things together: family projects, work, vacations, recreation, and reunions. (“Counsel to the Saints,” Ensign, Aug. 1993, p. 4)
- There is a great need for family recreation and cultural activities together. We should do things together as a family. It may mean a reduction in participation in women's clubs, in men's clubs, but if families could only seek their recreation and cultural activities more as a family unit, I am sure that untold benefits and blessings would accrue. Let us take more of our vacations together as families. Can we have a weekly evening at home, as has been admonished and counseled for years by the First Presidency of the Church? More wholesome activities together is a great need of families. (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.531)

First Presidency Letter to the Church, February 11, 1999

We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility.

We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.
Wholesome Recreation Contributes to Family Unity

Ezra Taft Benson

Our homes need the blessings which come from daily communion with God. Devotion in the home, which has been such an anchor to youth and parents alike, has all but vanished. A few generations ago it was a common practice. Then families knelt together in prayer; the scriptures were read aloud; and households joined in the singing of Church hymns. This practice, if revived, would contribute much to the strength of the home and the nation. The differences and irritations of the day melt away as families approach the throne of heaven together. Unity increases. The ties of love and affection are reinforced and the peace of heaven enters.

Such an atmosphere can be created as parents plan for recreation and diversion together with their children. An evening at home in wholesome activity; a picnic in the mountains or nearby park; or a fathers and sons' and mothers and daughters' project—these all tend to increase filial affection and love in the home and strengthen parent-children relations. Time thus spent yields big dividends. Love at home and obedience to parents increases as the bonds of home are made secure. (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.521)

Use Family Home Evening to Schedule Recreation

Ezra Taft Benson

Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for discussions of gospel principles, recreation, work projects, skits, songs around the piano, games, special refreshments, and family prayers. Like iron links in a chain, this practice will bind a family together, in love, pride, tradition, strength, and loyalty. (“Salvation—A Family Affair,” Ensign, July 1992, p. 4)

Recreation Should Be Uplifting

Brigham Young

I have frequently told the people at our places of recreation, if they cannot go there with the Spirit of the Lord, they had better stay at home. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.240)

Joseph F. Smith

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 impending sins, at the root of which, like the evil genius, lurks the spirit of cards and gaming. (Gospel Doctrine, p.328)

Dallin H. Oaks

Remember, our Savior, Jesus Christ, always builds us up and never tears us down. We should apply the power of that example in the ways we use our time, including our recreation and diversions. Consider the themes of the books, magazines, movies, television, and music we make popular by our patronage. Do the purposes and actions portrayed in our chosen entertainment build up or tear down the children of God? During my lifetime I have seen a strong trend to displace what builds up and dignifies the children of God with portrayals and performances that are depressing, demeaning, and destructive.

The powerful idea in this example is that whatever builds people up serves the cause of the Master, and whatever tears people down serves the cause of the adversary. We support one cause or the other every day by our patronage. This should remind us of our responsibility and motivate us toward fulfilling it in a way that would be pleasing to Him whose suffering offers us hope and whose example should give us direction. (“Powerful Ideas,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, p. 26)

Russell M. Nelson

Music, Dancing, and Other Recreation. The Lord expects us to seek after things that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.” (A of F 13.) Enjoy them and discern between uplifting influences and those that might lead you away from standards of the Lord. (“Standards of the Lord’s Standard-Bearers,” Ensign, Aug. 1991, p. 10)

From For the Strength of the Youth

Whatever you read, listen to, or look at has an effect on you. Therefore, choose only entertainment and media that uplift you. Good entertainment will help you to have good thoughts and make righteous choices. It will allow you to enjoy yourself without losing the Spirit of the Lord.
While much entertainment is good, some of it can lead you away from righteous living. Offensive material is often found in websites, concerts, movies, music, videocassettes, DVDs, books, magazines, pictures, and other media. Satan uses such entertainment to deceive you by making what is wrong and evil look normal and exciting. It can mislead you into thinking that everyone is doing things that are wrong.

Do not attend, view, or participate in entertainment that is vulgar, immoral, violent, or pornographic in any way. Do not participate in entertainment that in any way presents immorality or violent behavior as acceptable.

Pornography in all its forms is especially dangerous and addictive. What may begin as a curious indulgence can become a destructive habit that takes control of your life. It can lead you to sexual transgression and even criminal behavior. Pornography is a poison that weakens your self-control, changes the way you see others, causes you to lose the guidance of the Spirit, and can even affect your ability to have a normal relationship with your future spouse. If you encounter pornography, turn away from it immediately.

Depictions of violence often glamorize vicious behavior. They offend the Spirit and make you less able to respond to others in a sensitive, caring way. They contradict the Savior’s message of love for one another.

Have the courage to walk out of a movie or video party, turn off a computer or television, change a radio station, or put down a magazine if what is being presented does not meet Heavenly Father’s standards. Do these things even if others do not. Let your friends and family know that you are committed to keeping God’s standards. You have the gift of the Holy Ghost, which will give you strength and help you make good choices. ("Media and Entertainment" in For the Strength of the Youth)

Recreation Must Not Occupy Most of Our Time

Joseph F. Smith

There are limits in our recreations beyond which we cannot safely go. They should be guarded in character and curtailed in frequency to avoid excess. They should not occupy all, nor even the greater part of our time; indeed, they should be made incidental to the duties and obligations of life, and never be made a controlling motive or factor in our hopes and ambitions. There are so many dangers lurking in those amusements, and the fascination for them which take hold upon the lives of our young people, sometimes to the very possession of them, that they should be carefully guarded and warned against the temptations and evils that are likely to ensnare them, to their destruction. (Gospel Doctrine, p.320)

Avoid Recreation That May Lead to Sin

Brigham Young

Never suffer yourselves to mingle in any of those recreations that tend to sin and iniquity, while you are away from the body of the Church, where you cannot so fully control yourselves. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.326)

Many Amusements are Deceptive

Jeffrey R. Holland

Now, we live in an age when that cleanliness is more and more difficult to preserve. With modern technology even your youngest brothers and sisters can be carried virtually around the world before they are old enough to ride a tricycle safely across the street. What were in my generation carefree moments of moviegoing, TV watching, and magazine reading have now, with the additional availability of VCRs, the Internet, and personal computers, become amusements fraught with genuine moral danger. I put the word amusements in italics. Did you know that the original Latin meaning of the word amusement is “a diversion of the mind intended to deceive”? Unfortunately that is largely what “amusements” in our day have again become in the hands of the arch deceiver.

Recently I read an author who said: “Our leisure, even our play, is a matter of serious concern. [That is because] there is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.” I believe that to be absolutely true, and no such claiming and counterclaiming anywhere is more crucial and conspicuous than that being waged for the minds and morals, the personal purity of the young. (“Sanctify Yourselves,” Ensign, Nov. 2000, p. 38)

Beware of the Deception of Extreme Sports

James E. Faust

Recently I asked some special young people what I should know about your generation. One young man spoke for the group and said, “We live on the edge.” Since that time I have thought a lot about what it means.
to live on the edge. Of course it can mean many things. I think my fine young friend was referring to hazardous motorcycling, cliff climbing, and other forms of recreation which may involve taking unnecessary risks to produce a challenge or a thrill.

Some years ago Elder Marion D. Hanks told about a group of Boy Scouts who went cave exploring. The narrow trail was marked with white stones and lighted in sections as they went. After about an hour they came to a huge, high dome. Below it lay an area called the Bottomless Pit, so called because the floor of the cave had collapsed into a deep, gaping hole. It was hard not to jostle each other on that narrow path. Pretty soon, one of the bigger boys accidentally pushed a smaller boy into a muddy area away from the light. Terrified as he lost his footing, he screamed in the darkness. The ranger heard his cry of terror and came quickly. The boy let out another cry as the beam of the ranger's light showed that he was right on the very edge of the pit (Story adapted from “Questions for the Iconoclast,” Improvement Era, June 1957, pp. 444, 446–48, 450–51).

In this story, the boy was rescued. But this does not always happen. So many times young people are enticed to go to the very edge or even beyond it. With only a precarious toehold, it is easy to be seriously injured or even die. Life is too precious to throw away in the name of excitement, or, as Jacob said in the Book of Mormon, “looking beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14).

You young people may think that you are indestructible and that you are going to live forever. In a few years you will learn that this is not so. Living on the edge can also mean being perilously close to the Bottomless Pit. Of even more danger is to put your souls at risk by dabbling in drugs or other mind-abusing substances to “get a buzz.”

Some of you may think that you will discover your strengths and abilities by living on the edge. Perhaps you also think it is a way to find your identity or manliness. Your identity, however, cannot be found from thrill seeking, such as intentionally and unnecessarily exposing your life or your soul to any kind of danger, physical or moral. There will always be enough risks that will come to you naturally without your having to seek them out. Your strength and identity will come from honoring your priesthood, developing your talents, and serving the Lord. Each of you will have to work very hard to qualify for your eternal potential. It will not be easy. Finding your true identity will tax your ability far beyond climbing a dangerous cliff or speeding in a car or on a motorcycle. It will require all of your strength, stamina, intelligence, and courage. (“Acting for Ourselves and Not Being Acted Upon,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, pp. 45-46)

**Do Not Recreation Take Priority Over Spouse**

**Russell M. Nelson**

Let nothing in life take priority over your wife—neither work, recreation, nor hobby. (“Our Sacred Duty to Honor Women,” Ensign, May 1999, p. 39)

**Think Carefully About the Cost of Recreation**

**Henry B. Eyring**

In today’s world, instead of telling young couples to make bonnets, President Young might suggest they think carefully about what they really need in cars, clothes, recreation, houses, vacations, and whatever they will someday try to provide for their children. And he might point out that the difference in cost between what the world says is necessary and what children really need could allow the margin in time that a father and a mother might need with their children in order to bring them home to their Heavenly Father. (“The Family,” Ensign, Feb. 1998, p. 16)

**Sabbath Day Not a Day For Recreation**

**Spencer W. Kimball**

- Strange as it may seem, some of our brethren, faithful in all other respects, seem to justify themselves in missing their sacrament meetings, and their stake conferences, in order to beat all the other hunters into the wildlife area when the season opens. The Church favors legitimate recreation, and urges its people to organize picnic parties and to enjoy the great outdoors for the fellowship that it offers, but with six other days in the week, the Sabbath certainly need not be desecrated.... I think it isn't so much a matter of giving up things; it is a matter of shifting times and choosing seasons. (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.231)

- To hunt and fish on the Lord's day is not keeping it holy. To plant or cultivate or harvest crops on the Sabbath is not keeping holy the Lord's day. To go into the canyons for picnics, to attend games or rodeos or races or shows or other amusements on that day is not to keep it in holy remembrance.

Strange as it may seem, some Latter-day Saints, faithful in all other respects, justify themselves in missing their church meetings on occasion for
recreational purposes, feeling that the best fishing will be missed if one is not on the stream on opening day or that the vacation will not be long enough if one does not set off on Sunday or that one will miss a movie he wanted to see if he does not go on the Sabbath. And in their breach of the Sabbath they often take their families with them.

The Savior said:

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. . .” (Matthew 5:19.)

There is no criticism of legitimate recreation -- sports, picnics, plays, and motion pictures; all have potential for revitalizing life, and the Church as an organization actively sponsors such activities; but there is a proper time and place for all worthwhile things -- a time for work, a time for play, a time for worship. (Faith Precedes the Miracle, p.269)

Ezra Taft Benson

Many -- too many -- have almost ceased to observe the Sabbath. Not only is it a workday now, but it is supremely a day of amusement and recreation: golf, skiing, skating, hunting, fishing, picnicking, racing, movies, theaters, ball playing, dancing, and other forms of fun-making -- all are coming largely to be the rule among too many so-called Christians. Some churches are said to encourage all these, if properly conducted. But God's law says keep the Sabbath day holy. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work" (Exodus 20:9). [Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.438]

Joseph B. Wirthlin

The Lord said: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8) and made Sabbath day observance a sign between Him and the people to indicate their obedience. (See Ex. 31:13–17.) That commandment and sign have never been rescinded. In our day, standards for keeping the Sabbath day holy are lowered a little at a time by some individuals until practically anything seems to become acceptable. The sign between the Lord and His covenant people is trampled underfoot as Church members skip Sunday meetings to seek recreation at lakes and beaches, in the mountains, at sports arenas, and at theaters. Parking lots at supermarkets and discount stores often are full on Sundays. Many store owners feel compelled to open their doors on Sundays because of the demand for the merchandise and services. The people who misuse the Sabbath lose the blessings of spiritual food and growth promised to those who keep this commandment. (“The Lord’s Side,” Ensign, Mar. 1993, p. 71)

H. David Burton

Many have come to feel that the terms “Sabbath day” and “play day” are synonymous. A friend who manages several small retail outlets in predominantly LDS communities tells me he can precisely tell when Sunday worship services conclude because customer counts increase dramatically. Recreation in its various forms has become “king of the Sabbath day.” (“A Season of Opportunity,” Ensign, Nov. 1998, p. 9)

Church Programs Should More Concerned With Faith Than Recreation

Gordon B. Hinckley

In working under this new program [i.e., the change in budget] let us not quibble or complain. Let us not get bogged down in discussions over a division of dollars and dimes. Let us not worry and get all worked up about exotic excursions that now may not be possible. These might provide wonderful fun, and young people, we all agree, need to have some fun under the direction of Church officers and teachers. But these officers and teachers, and these young men and women, are people of ingenuity who with faith and prayer can work out programs costing little in dollars that will yield tremendous dividends in wholesome recreation and faith-building activities. Perhaps we should be less concerned with fun and more with faith. This is a new and wonderful program. As with any new program, there will be a few items that will need to be corrected as we go along. There are still unanswered questions, particularly concerning recreation properties. Time and experience will provide the answers. Meanwhile, be grateful and prayerfully go to work to make it function. (“Rise to a Larger Vision of the Work,” Ensign, May 1990, p. 97)

Do Not Let Recreation Replace Gospel Priorities

Ezra Taft Benson

This kind of love can be shown for your wives in so many ways. First and foremost, nothing except God Himself takes priority over your wife in your life—not work, not recreation, not hobbies. Your wife is your precious, eternal helpmate—your companion. (“To the Fathers in Israel,” Ensign, Nov. 1987, p. 50)
John K. Carmack

The final danger I shall call substitution. Some fine and capable people become so committed to science, philosophy, history, art, music, athletics, professional pursuits, intellectual hobbies, or recreation that these interests replace the simple core values, covenants, and doctrines of the gospel. These pursuits become a substitute religion and the governing force in their lives. ("The Soil and Roots of Testimony," Ensign, Nov. 1988, p. 27)