

Lock Your Heart

Elder Spencer W. Kimball
Latin American Mission Tour, 1968

If there are problems in the mission that you can give me light on so that I can help your President and help you, that's what I'd like. If there are situations that are difficult, if there are problems that are unknown - let me give you one example:

In one of the missions I found a bad situation. One or two missionaries had been breaking rules (as the President has talked about this morning). They began to break some rules. All they did was go over to a certain home every Sunday night for a dinner. The President didn't know anything about it. It wasn't very serious; they should have been home studying, but it was a regular thing every week. After a little while these missionaries were bringing others and pretty soon they were dancing on Sunday night, a few of them. Then they were doing a little flirting and then a few of them got to playing cards there every Sunday night. And then they were dancing in the dark with some of the Saint's girls!

The next thing we knew there was an excommunication. I came there and the things were revealed. I found that where there was only one boy who had actually gone to the extreme where he had to be excommunicated, there were about eighteen missionaries in this area who had followed like sheep over the ledge. They had not intended to do anything wrong, but they had just kind of followed the leadership. They had gone there to the meals - and they had gotten into little flirtations - not too deeply, but the thing is that there were eighteen missionaries who knew that this boy had gone too far. They knew that he was necking and petting but not one of them would ever tell! When I interviewed them and visited with them I said, "Why didn't you tell the President that conditions were bad?" One of them said, "Well, That's none of my business! This Elder can do as he pleases! If he wants to wreck his mission, that's okay with me, it's his business, it's his mission! If he wants to ruin his life that's up to him. It's his-life!!!"

And then I said to these Elders, "Well what about your missions? Isn't this your mission, too? Isn't this your church, too? Are you willing that one person nullify all that you've done here? You've spent 20 months down here, Elder, and you have been working reasonably hard and at times you have done remarkably good work. Are you willing that one scandal - one scandal in this out-of-the-world place - will neutralize all that you've done? All of your efforts? That's what happens! Are you willing to do that?" He said, "Well I hadn't thought of it like that." Well, but that's what happened, isn't it, Elders? This is your mission! This is your Church! One scandal in a community is enough to annihilate the work of all of you, maybe all the work you do cumulatively- for all your two years - neutralized by one scandal in the community! Do you think that you have a loyalty? Where are your loyalties? Are you loyal to yourself? Are you loyal-to your companion? Are you willing to let him go on, and on, and on, and on, until he breaks his neck?

When he was excommunicated it was a sad day in that mission because he was a fine young man and all the missionaries loved him, and some of them were weeping that day. I remember! Some of them were weeping tears! Their brother was being excommunicated from the Church and sent home in disgrace!

And then I said to them, "Elders! Do you know who excommunicated this boy? Not me; not your President; not the Elder's court. It was you!! You excommunicated your brother! How? Well, if you'd have said, 'Elder, lets not do that! That disturbs our whole program. We lose spirituality, all of us, when things like this happen.' Now suppose that he didn't yield and you said to him again, 'Elder, you shouldn't do that! We can't be doing those kinds of things!' And then suppose you'd gone a third time and said, 'Elder, I'm sorry, if you don't desist I'm going to have to report to the Mission President because I'm not going to have you destroy my work! I've worked too hard to have it all go to the wind! I'm going to tell the President, not as a tattletale, but I'm going to report to the President so that he can protect the whole program, if you don't desist!'"

You see there is nothing ugly about that, is there? That's the way it should be because our loyalty is first to the Lord, to the Church, to the mission, to the World, isn't it?

One more little incident that is connected: In one United States mission one day a neighbor came into the home of a new member. The neighbor was not a member, but she came and she was used to just walking in through the door- you know, she didn't always knock! So she came over to this home this day and she saw her friend, the Latter-day Saint sister, sitting on a chair here and an Elder at her feet- this will shock you- trimming her toe-nails or painting her toe-nails, or something! Well, now that isn't an unpardonable sin, but it was indiscreet, wasn't it? Even if there was nothing else that happened, just the fact that he was sitting on the floor and that he didn't have on his tie and coat, and here was a woman partly dressed, and here he was painting her toe-nails or doing something! Anyway. that city was closed, absolutely closed to missionary work for 20 years! Do you think missionaries could go in that city? Why of course they couldn't! Because there was still the memory of this indiscretion! They hadn't committed sin; at least, I'm quite sure he had never committed immorality. I think it wasn't any more than an ugly indiscretion. It was ugly enough, wasn't it? It was what it led to, you see?

That's why I say this mission belongs to you. There are 150 of you and this mission belongs to all of you. If anything happens to any part of this mission it gets a black eye! It makes it more difficult to do anything! And it makes it more difficult for you to go into the homes where they have heard ugly things about the Church. That's why one Elder isn't by himself. He can't be a loner, He has got to fit into the program, hasn't he? And everyone of you is interested. Everyone!! And you can't afford to let your companion, or anyone you know, do anything very serious because it all brings trouble to you and to the whole program, Well, think about that a little, because some people say, "I'm not going to be a stool pigeon! I'm not going to tattle! I'm not going to be telling on people!" It isn't that at all! It's a reporting just like if you saw a couple of robbers going into your neighbor's home. Would you say, "Well, it's up to them! It's up to my neighbors!" No! !

We'd become involved! We'd rush to the telephone, we'd call the police! In every case, wouldn't we?

If we saw somebody being injured, being killed - like in New York sometime ago, a girl was stabbed and cut all to pieces by some maniac, and there were many people who saw it and did nothing about it! She yelled for help, screamed for help, said, "He's killing me!!" But nobody would move! They didn't even call the police and there she lay, finally dead, on the street! Nobody would involve themselves. It's time we would begin to get involved when involvement is proper. And when any missionary in any mission begins to break mission rules, it's time that all his companions should become involved! It doesn't mean that they take over. It doesn't mean that they get ugly and mean. It just means that they are interested and involved. There is a nice way to do it! I tell you there wouldn't be very many broken rules if one missionary would just say to the other, "Brother, lets not do that! Let's don't do that! 'Let's don't stand there and talk to those girls! That isn't good!" And if we stop it when it's fresh - when it's young you can stop it - but when it gets deeply entrenched, that sin is awfully hard to dig out. And many times we have to send missionaries home to their families in disgrace, with excommunication frequently, because maybe their companions didn't love them enough! Maybe their companions weren't helpful enough to say, "Well, now, you're getting off the line just a little here! Let's don't do that! Let's get busy and do this, and this, and this!"

This is one program and we are all concerned about it. These mission rules, you see, are very important. We've had 137 years of experience. Now that ought to be enough experience to prove something, shouldn't it?

Through 137 years we have come to the conclusion that if two people will stay together the chances for sin or serious trouble are reduced about 98%. Once in a great while two companions will both go sour at the same time, but it isn't the usual thing. If missionaries will, when they leave Salt Lake City, the Mission Home - the day they are set apart - if they will just lock their hearts! If they've got a girl in there that's all right, lock her in! But if you haven't got one in, then lock it against all other girls of every description! And the same applies for young women, too. I am talking mainly to you Elders. You lock your heart and leave the key at home. And you never open it here! It's impossible to fall in love with someone unless you open your heart! Your heart is the only organ that has any ability to get into love, you see, and when a missionary says, "I just fell in love with a girl!" Well, that's as silly as it can be! Nobody does, nobody ever did!

So we just don't fall in love unless we are fooling around. We never fall in a crater unless we are somewhere near the edge of it. I have been up to Vesuvius and on a number of craters and volcanoes and I know you just don't ever fall in a crater, unless you are on the edge of it. And so you just keep your hearts locked! I said lock them in Salt Lake when you leave the Mission Home and don't give a thought to it. But if you go around say, "Well, she is kind of a pretty girl! She surely is a sweet little thing! She's a nice girl! I'd like to talk to her- I'd just like to visit with her!" Well, you are in for trouble and that trouble can bring you a lifetime of trouble and a lifetime of regrets if you continue on with it.

So, can I impress that again? LOCK YOUR HEARTS and leave the key at home! Wherever you live, leave the key home with your folks. And your heart - it's only that part of it that deals with people generally that you open up. We just can't tolerate it, can we? We can't individually; we can't totally. Someone said, "Well, is there any harm to marry a Mexican girl if you are working in Mexico!" "No, that isn't any crime, but it proves that some missionary has had his heart open! He has unlocked it! Is it wrong to marry a German girl when you have been on a German mission? Why no, there is no crime in that, if you met her some other way. But when you meet her in the mission field and you have opened your heart, I tell you it isn't right, and you have shortchanged your mission! Just keep your hearts locked. Your whole thought should be missionary work. How can I make it more plain and more important than that? I'd like to because there is no reason whatever for any missionary to ever become involved, not even in a decent way, with any girl in the mission field. It isn't the place! You guaranteed, you promised! You went through the Temple! You remember what you did in the Temple? Remember you promised you'd do all the things the brethren request of you, to live the commandments. That's one of the commandments when you go into the mission field: "Thou shalt not flirt! Thou shalt not associate with young women in the mission field - or anyone else for that matter - on any other basis than the proselyting basis." You promised, and you would not want to break a promise you made before the Lord in the Holy Temple of the Lord. And when you wrote, the letter of acceptance to President McKay that was implied in it. You knew of course - every missionary knows - that he isn't going out to court, that he isn't going out to find a wife! He's got plenty of opportunity when he gets home, and the mission field isn't the place.

Sometimes we find a young man who has not been popular at home; he has been very, very backward at home and he hasn't had many dates. So when he gets out into the mission field and somebody flatters him a little - some girl shows a lot of interest in him - why he's flattered. He thinks all at once, "Well, that's whom I should marry!" Well, I say this once more by repetition and for emphasis, you LOCK YOUR HEARTS and if you haven't done so, do it now and send the key back! You will not permit any impression, no romantic thought or impression in your mind. For two years you have given yourself to the Lord, totally, to teach the Gospel to the world. When you have done this perfectly for two years and then you go home, you are infinitely more attractive, more able, more dignified, more mature to make those important decisions for your life in the matter of personages to enjoy eternity with you.

Well, I didn't intend to get on to that, either, but I've been on it, and I hope I have not been offensive in it at all. I hope you got the spirit of it. Should you know of any problems that are aborning, problems that are beginning to develop, some missionary who is getting off the track, some group that is getting a little careless about mission rules, you can talk to them in a sweet kindly way. If they persist, then there is something else to do and you have a loyalty to it.

God bless you missionaries and I hope to visit with you a little longer later.