



COMBATING CORRUPTION

Principle (1)(a): People in positions of power should not lightly violate or discard long-standing political norms, especially norms that serve to limit the abuse of power.

D&C 121:39

Principle (1)(b): Government officials and institutions should be honest and transparent, insofar as possible without harming national security and individual rights.

D&C 123:13; Alma 37:25

Principle (1)(c): Elected and appointed officials and government employees alike must eschew conflicts of interest and avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest in fidelity to the public trust. Appointees to specialized government roles should be well-qualified to serve in those roles.

Mosiah 29:35-36; D&C 134:3

>>>> GOALS

- Learn to identify corruption and understand its effects.
- Decide what ethical expectations you have for your elected officials and commit to speak up or vote against those who don't measure up.

>>>> SCRIPTURE STUDY

*"And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."
Matthew 20:27*

As citizens, we agree to delegate considerable power to our government leaders to create and maintain a system of government that protects our rights. This agreement requires that all of us, both citizens and leaders, follow the rule of law that results. As such, we can and should demand that officials use their power only for the good of the people they represent by working within the law and existing norms. This includes acting honestly and transparently and avoiding conflicts of interest (for example, making political appointments according to qualification instead of favoritism or political gain).

Abuse of government power for personal gain is called corruption. Corrupt officials make decisions (like where to spend money, which laws to enact, and who enforces or interprets the law) based on how it will help them personally rather than how it will help the country overall. This undermines the agreement that the officials will use power for the good of the people, causing citizen distrust and a loss of government credibility and legitimacy. Distrust leads to feeling of powerlessness, resulting in a disengaged, apathetic citizenry who fail to hold their government leaders accountable.

We have to be able to identify both corruption and the proper use of government power, and be willing to use our voices and our vote to support those who would use entrusted power for the good of the people and decry corruption.



How do we fight corruption?

In the United States we have options for fighting corruption, but they must be used and protected. These include: the independence and power of federal law enforcement from political interference; a free press; and enacting and enforcing laws requiring transparency of government officials in both their finances and official duties, as well as laws against nepotism, favoritism, and office selling. The U.S. Constitution provides that impeachment is available to Congress as a check against corruption for “the President, the Vice president, and all civil officers of the United States.” *Above all, we have the power to vote for ethical candidates and vote out corrupt government officials.*

THE COST OF CORRUPTION

CORRUPTION **WEAKENS** OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

1. Checks and balances stop working when leaders disregard the rule of law and seek to silence their critics, including the media.
2. The people lose their power when elections or other political processes become corrupted.
3. Government loses its purpose when it can't be trusted to protect rights, including providing basic services, to its people.

CORRUPTION IS **EXPENSIVE**

1. Corruption adds the cost of bribery to business transactions as well as increases risk and uncertainty.
2. People are more reluctant to invest because they can't predict the way the fair market will function, partly because competition is distorted.

CORRUPTION PROMOTES **INEQUALITY**

1. Corruption favors those with money and assets and causes the poor to become poorer.
2. As corruption makes it harder and more costly to access basic services like health care or education, the poor are the first to face barriers or lose access completely.

CORRUPTION IS **WASTEFUL**

1. A government employee hired or appointed for personal gain is less likely to be qualified for the position, compromising performance and effective governance.
2. Corrupt officials can channel public funds to projects that seem important but benefit them personally (like a power plant or pipeline), instead of to higher-need projects that would use the funds more efficiently (like hospitals, schools, or roads).
3. Embezzled money is never applied to public needs



>>>> LEARN MORE

Corruption in Real Life

U.S. Corruption
Historic U.S. Corruption Scandals

International Corruption
True stories of corruption around the world and how people are fighting back.

Government Resources

The United State Office of Government Ethics
runs the ethics program designed to prevent and resolve conflicts of interest for the executive branch, including presidential appointees.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
is the law that keeps citizens in the know about their government.

- >> Learn about FOIA
- >> How to make a FOIA request

Fighting Corruption

Transparency International
hosts the Corruption Perceptions Index, which ranks 180 countries and territories according to their perceived levels of public sector corruption. Take a look to see which country is number one, and how the U.S. compares.

World Justice Project
is an organization committed to advancing the rule of law, developed the Four Universal Principles of the Rule of Law and the WJP Rule of Law Index, which annually reports how the rule of law is experienced worldwide.

The Columbia Law School Center for the Advancement of Public Integrity
maintains a list of organizations that focus on public integrity issues like government transparency, ethics, and accountability, anti-corruption efforts, and others.

The Center for Responsive Politics
tracks money in U.S. politics and its effect on elections and public policy.

Look for this banner on other MWEГ materials to learn more about the importance of combating corruption.





>>>> IDEAS FOR TEACHING CHILDREN

- **Defining and Defending Norms:** *Together, make a simple list of the most important house rules for keeping family members happy and safe. Then think of something that would be clearly inappropriate although not specifically prohibited by the list (like letting the neighborhood possum sleep in your bed!), and ask if it would be ok to do it. Make a case for the action since it is not prohibited. Then, talk about what a norm is, identify some, and discuss why they are important.*
- **Honesty and Transparency:** *Ask your kids to think of something they really want (a dog, or a trip to Disneyland) and then discuss the way they would like your family to go about making that decision. Would they like to hear about the decision after it is made by a parent, or would they like to be invited to a family discussion about the decision and have an opportunity to express their opinions? How do they feel when no reasoning or a false reason is given for an unpopular parental decision? Relate your discussion to government action.*
- **Who benefits?** *Pass out cards with routine government actions on them, like “hiring an employee”, “appointing a judge”, “awarding a contract”, “making a budget”, “withholding funds”, “accepting a gift”, etc. We expect government officials to make these decisions for the benefit of their citizens. Talk about circumstances where a decision is made in order to benefit the government official instead. Why is this unfair? Who suffers as a result?*

>>>> THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- *How have government leaders breached citizen trust if they make policy decisions for personal gain?*
- *Is abuse of power ever justified by the good it accomplishes? Why or why not?*
- *Why is it easier to go along with a crowd or a leader instead of standing up for what we believe? How can we get better at recognizing when and how to push back against that kind of pressure?*
- *Why is transparency in government important? What circumstances make it more or less important?*

>>>> TAKE ACTION

- *Discuss these principles with MWEG’s Facebook discussion group or host or attend an MWEG chapter meeting on the topic.*
- *Plan a “Family Home Evening” with your family or friends using some of the ideas suggested here.*
- *Host an MWEG Neighborhood Informational Meeting (NIM) to discuss these ideas with neighbors and friends.*
- *Look for evidence of government corruption as you stay up to date on current events. Contact your elected representatives to express your concerns or organize a peaceful demonstration at a Capitol Hill office or elected officials’ home office in your state.*
- *Use the resources listed on page 3 to learn how citizens in your country experience the rule of law and how your country ranks in public sector corruption.*
- *Learn about political candidates and whether they have a history of corrupt practices. Vote for those who follow political norms and the rule of law, value honesty and transparency, and avoid or appropriately address conflicts of interest.*

MORMON WOMEN FOR ETHICAL GOVERNMENT

MWEG is an organization dedicated to inspiring women of faith to be ambassadors of peace who transcend partisanship and courageously advocate for ethical government.

www.mormonwomenforethicalgovernment.org