

PARENTHOOD: CREATING A GOSPEL- CENTERED HOME

The ideal way to transform your home into a house of learning is to hold family home evening faithfully.

—Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

SELECTED TEACHINGS

Parental Success

President Spencer W. Kimball

“I have sometimes seen children of good families rebel, resist, stray, sin, and even actually fight God. In this they bring sorrow to their parents, who have done their best to set in movement a current and to teach and live as examples. But I have repeatedly seen many of these same children, after years of wandering, mellow, realize what they have been missing, repent, and make great contribution to the spiritual life of their community. The reason I believe this can take place is that, despite all the adverse winds to which these people have been subjected, they have been influenced still more, and much more than they realized, by the current of life in the homes in which they were reared. When, in later years, they feel a longing to recreate in their own families the same atmosphere they enjoyed as children, they are likely to turn to the faith that gave meaning to their parents’ lives” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 160; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 111).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Nurture your children with love and the admonitions of the Lord.

“Rearing happy, peaceful children is no easy challenge in today’s world, but it can be done, and it is being done.

“Responsible parenthood is the key.

“Above all else, children need to know and feel they are loved, wanted, and appreciated. They need to be assured of that often. Obviously, this is a role parents should fill, and most often the mother can do it best. . . .

“Children must be taught to pray, to rely on the Lord for guidance, and to express appreciation for the blessings that are theirs. I recall kneeling at the bedsides of our young children, helping them with their prayers.

“Children must be taught right from wrong. They can and must learn the commandments of God. They must be taught that it is wrong to steal, lie, cheat, or covet what others have.

“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 time viewing television can be destructive, and pornography in this medium should not be tolerated. It is estimated that growing children today watch television over twenty-five hours per week.

“Communities have a responsibility to assist the family in promoting wholesome entertainment. What a community tolerates will become tomorrow’s standard for today’s youth.

“Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for 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.

“Family study of the scriptures should be the practice in our homes each Sabbath day.

“Daily devotionals are also a commendable practice, where scripture reading, singing of hymns, and family prayer are a part of our daily routine.

“Parents must prepare their children for the ordinances of the gospel. . . .

“The home is what needs reforming. Try today, and tomorrow, to make a change in your home by praying twice a day with your family. . . . Ask a blessing upon every meal you eat. Spend ten minutes . . . reading a chapter from the words of the Lord in the

[scriptures]. . . Let love, peace, and the Spirit of the Lord, kindness, charity, sacrifice for others, abound in your families. Banish harsh words, . . . and let the Spirit of God take possession of your hearts. Teach to your children these things, in spirit and power. . . . Not one child in a hundred would go astray, if the home environment, example and training, were in harmony with . . . the gospel of Christ.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939, p. 302.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 84–87; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 60–61).

Elder Orson F. Whitney

“The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110).

Elder Howard W. Hunter

“A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent. Perhaps there are children who have come into the world that would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. Likewise, perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Obviously, family values mirror our personal priorities. Given the gravity of current conditions,

would parents be willing to give up just one outside thing, giving that time and talent instead to the family? Parents and grandparents, please scrutinize your schedules and priorities in order to ensure that life’s prime relationships get more prime time! Even consecrated and devoted Brigham Young was once told by the Lord, ‘Take especial care of your family’ (D&C 126:3). Sometimes it is the most conscientious who need this message the most!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 90).

Elder Richard G. Scott

“Some of you have children who do not respond to you, choosing entirely different paths. Father in Heaven has repeatedly had that same experience. While some of His children have used His gift of agency to make choices against His counsel, He continues to love them. Yet, I am sure, He has never blamed Himself for their unwise choices” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 34).

Elder Robert D. Hales

“Countless things can be done within the walls of our homes to strengthen the family. May I share a few ideas that may help identify the areas that need strengthening in our own families. I offer them in a spirit of encouragement, knowing that each family—and each family member—is unique. . . .

- Spend individual time with our children, letting them choose the activity and the subject of conversation. Block out distractions. . . .

- Pray daily with our children.

- Read the scriptures together. I remember my own mother and father reading the scriptures as we children sat on the floor and listened. Sometimes they would ask, ‘What does that scripture mean to you?’ or ‘How does it make you feel?’ Then they would listen to us as we responded in our own words.

- Read the words of the living prophets and other inspiring articles for children, youth, and adults in Church magazines. . . .

- Hold family home evening every week. As parents, we are sometimes too intimidated to teach or testify to our children. I have been guilty of that in my own life. Our children need to have us share spiritual feelings with them and to teach and bear testimony to them.

“• Hold family councils to discuss family plans and concerns. Some of the most effective family councils are one on one with each family member. Help our children know their ideas are important. Listen to them and learn from them. . . .

“• Eat together when possible, and have meaningful mealtime discussions.

“• Work together as a family, even if it may be faster and easier to do the job ourselves. Talk with our sons and daughters as we work together. I had that opportunity every Saturday with my father.

“• Help our children learn how to build good friendships and make their friends feel welcome in our homes. Get to know the parents of the friends of our children.

“• Teach our children by example how to budget time and resources. Help them learn self-reliance and the importance of preparing for the future.

“• Teach our children the history of our ancestors and of our own family history.

“• Build family traditions. Plan and carry out meaningful vacations together, considering our children’s needs, talents, and abilities. Help them create happy memories, improve their talents, and build their feelings of self-worth. . . .

“• Remember the Prophet Joseph Smith’s words: ‘Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind’ (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 240)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 41–44; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 33–34).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“Even that beloved and wonderfully successful parent President Joseph F. Smith pled, ‘Oh! God, let me not lose my own.’ That is every parent’s cry, and in it is something of every parent’s fear. But no one has failed who keeps trying and keeps praying. You have every right to receive encouragement and to know in the end your children will call your name blessed” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 48; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 36).

Bishop Robert D. Hales

“A child, even one raised with great love and care and carefully taught, may choose, when an adult, not to follow those teachings for a variety of reasons. How should we react? We understand and respect the principle of agency. We pray that life’s experiences will help them regain their desire and ability to live the gospel. They are still our children, and we will love and care about them always. We do not lock the doors of our house nor the doors to our heart.

“Some people feel they cannot accept or fulfill a Church calling if one of their children is straying. As we accept the calling and do our best, we may have a profound spiritual effect on those we love the most. If we think other families don’t have any difficulties or any problems, we just don’t know them well enough. . . .

“Certainly parents will make mistakes in their parenting process, but through humility, faith, prayer, and study, each person can learn a better way and in so doing bless the lives of family members now and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow.

“The Lord’s promises are sure: ‘I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go’ (Psalm 32:8). And ‘whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you’ (3 Nephi 18:20)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10–11; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 10).

Family Home Evening

First Presidency—Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose

“To this end we advise and urge the inauguration of a ‘Home Evening’ throughout the Church, at which time fathers and mothers may gather their boys and girls about them in the home and teach them the word of the Lord. . . .

“If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them” (“Home Evening,” *Improvement Era*, June 1915, 733–34).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Take time to have a meaningful weekly home evening. With your husband presiding, participate in a spiritual and an uplifting home evening each week. Have your children actively involved. Teach them correct principles. Make this one of your great family traditions” (*To the Mothers in Zion*, 9).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“The ideal way to transform your home into a house of learning is to hold family home evening faithfully. The Church has reserved Monday evening for that purpose. In 1915 the First Presidency instructed local leaders and parents to inaugurate a home evening, a time when parents should teach their families the principles of the gospel. The Presidency wrote: ‘If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them.’

“President David O. McKay gave the same promise in 1965 and added that the youth will gain power ‘to choose righteousness and peace, and be assured an eternal place in the family circle of our Father.’ In 1976 the Presidency reaffirmed that ‘regular participation in family home evening will develop increased personal worth, family unity, love for our fellowmen, and trust in our Father in heaven.’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 86–87; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 70–71).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“Hold family home evenings *every week* without fail. This is a wonderful time to share your testimony with your children. Give them an opportunity to share their feelings about the gospel. Help them learn to recognize when they feel the presence of the Spirit. Family home evenings will help create an island of refuge and security within your own home” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 12).

Family Council Processes**President Spencer W. Kimball**

“We also said last year that we have paused on some plateaus long enough, and then we gave an emphasis to councils—family councils, ward and stake councils, and on through to area and Churchwide councils.

“If you continue to observe carefully, you will see how all these developments are pointing us in one direction. As a people, we are being positioned to do more perfectly that which the Lord has given us to do” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 5; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 4).

“Think of the learning that accompanies a family council on the family budget. How do Mom and Dad feel when a teenage son who, because he is included and understands the budgeting process, volunteers part of his summer’s income to help replace that tired refrigerator?” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 125; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 78).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Every family has problems and challenges. But successful families try to work together toward solutions instead of resorting to criticism and contention. They pray for each other, discuss, and give encouragement. Occasionally these families fast together in support of one of the family members.

“Strong families support each other.

“Successful families do things together: family projects, work, vacations, recreation, and reunions.

“Successful parents have found that it is not easy to rear children in an environment polluted with evil. Therefore, they take deliberate steps to provide the best of wholesome influences. Moral principles are taught. Good books are made available and read. Television watching is controlled. Good and uplifting music is provided. But most importantly, the scriptures are read and discussed as a means to help develop spiritual-mindedness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 6–7; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 6).

“I mention family councils because of our persistent emphasis on family unity and family solidarity. By encouraging parents to hold family councils, we imitate in our homes a heavenly pattern” (in Conference Report, Mar.–Apr. 1979, 124; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 88).

President Stephen L. Richards

“The genius of our Church government is government through *councils*. . . . I have had enough experience to know the value of councils. Hardly a day passes but that I see the wisdom, God’s wisdom, in creating councils: to govern his Kingdom” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 86).

Elder L. Tom Perry

"I would make the family home evening times on Monday night a family council meeting where children were taught by parents how to prepare for their roles as family members and prospective parents. Family home evening would begin with a family dinner together, followed by a council meeting, where such topics as the following would be discussed and training would be given: temple preparation, missionary preparation, home management, family finances, career development, education, community involvement, cultural improvement, acquisition and care of real and personal property, family planning calendars, use of leisure time, and work assignments. The evening could then be climaxed with a special dessert and time for parents to have individual meetings with each child" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 8–9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 9).

"Each family organization should include a family council comprised of all members of the family unit. Here the basic responsibilities of the family organization can be taught to the children. They can learn how to make decisions and act upon those decisions. Too many are growing to marriageable age unprepared for this responsibility. Work ethics and self-preparedness can be taught in a most effective way in a family council. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., has paraphrased an old statement. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," he would say. 'But all play and no work makes Jack a useless boy.' (As quoted by Harold B. Lee, 'Administering True Charity,' address delivered at the welfare agricultural meeting, 5 Oct. 1968)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 119; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 88).

See quotation on page 99.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

"Let us remember that the basic council of the Church is the family council. Fathers and mothers should apply diligently the principles I have discussed in their relationships with each other and with their children. As we do so, our homes can become a heaven on earth" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 34; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 26).

Perhaps the best gift parents can give their children is to love each other.

Elder Ronald E. Poelman

"Unity in temporal matters, as in spiritual matters, is essential to our success. At each step, consensus of the council members must be obtained, through prayer and discussion, to achieve that unity which is prerequisite to the Lord's help. To be effective, decisions must be reached by divine consensus, not by compromise. Participants are not competing advocates, representing special interests, but rather contributing members of a unified body" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 126; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 91).

Good Marriages Bless Children**President Howard W. Hunter**

"You should express regularly to your wife and children your reverence and respect for her. Indeed, one of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

Elder Delbert L. Stapley

"If parents are immature and cannot settle their differences without anger, fighting, and name-calling, a child becomes most insecure, and as he grows older he is apt to take up with the wrong type of friends just to get away from an unhappy home environment" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 45).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

"Often parents communicate most effectively with their children by the way they listen to and address each other. Their conversations showing gentleness and love are heard by our ever-alert, impressionable children" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 81; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 53).

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis

"Perhaps the best gift parents can give their children is to love each other, to enjoy each other, and even to hold hands and demonstrate their love by the manner in which they talk to each other" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 12).

Bishop Robert D. Hales

“It helps children to see that good parents can have differing opinions and that these differences can be worked out without striking, yelling, or throwing things. They need to see and feel calm communication with respect for each other’s viewpoints so they themselves will know how to work through differences in their own lives” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 9).

Parenting: An Eternal Perspective**President Spencer W. Kimball**

“From the beginning, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has emphasized family life. We have always understood that the foundations of the family, as an eternal unit, were laid even before this earth was created! Society without basic family life is without foundation and will disintegrate into nothingness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 4).

President Howard W. Hunter

“The prophets of the past have spoken also of those who may not have opportunity to marry in this life. President Lorenzo Snow said:

“‘There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive’ (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, comp. Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984], p. 138).

“I believe President Snow’s statement to be true” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 49–50).

President Boyd K. Packer

“Although our thoughts are centered in this sacred and solemn assembly on the noble titles High Priest, President, Apostle, Prophet, Seer, Revelator, the heavens are not offended if we at once speak of father, mother, child, brother, sister, family—even dad, mom, grandma, grandpa, baby.

“If you are reverent and prayerful and obedient, the day will come when there will be revealed to you why the God of heaven has commanded us to address him as *Father*, and the Lord of the Universe as *Son*. Then you will have discovered the pearl of great price spoken of in the scriptures and willingly go and sell all that you have that you might obtain it.

“The great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16) revealed to prophets is the plan for a happy family. It is the love story between husband and wife, parents and children, that renews itself through the ages” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 8–9; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 9).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“‘Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels’ [in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, pp. 12–13].

“That message and warning from the First Presidency is needed more, not less, today than when it was given. And no voice from any organization of the Church on any level of administration equals that of the First Presidency” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 23).

“When one knows the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is cause to rejoice. The words *joy* and *rejoice* appear through the scriptures repetitively. Latter-day Saints are happy people. When one knows the doctrine, parenthood becomes a sacred obligation, the begetting of life a sacred privilege. Abortion would be unthinkable. No one would think of suicide. And all the frailties and problems of men would fade away” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 23; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 18).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

“It follows that everything we have in the Church centers around celestial marriage, and that salvation is a family affair. . . .

“. . . Thus the family unit is the most important organization in time or in eternity.

“And thus we should have more interest in and concern for our families than for anything else in life.

“Every major decision should be made on the basis of the effect it will have on the family unit. Our

courtship, schooling, and choice of friends; our employment, hobbies, and place of residence; our social life, the organizations we join, and the service we render mankind; and above all, our obedience or the lack of it to the standards of revealed truth—all these things should be decided on the basis of their effect on the family unit.

“There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units of the kind contemplated in the gospel of Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 27).

Elder M. Russell Ballard

“I stand in awe when I consider the great confidence Heavenly Father has placed in you and me when he allows us the privilege of being the mortal fathers and mothers to his eternal spirit offspring. We must never forget that he has a vested interest in every one of us, and we must realize how important each human soul is in God’s eternal plan. When we understand the importance of each soul, we can go before him confidently in prayer to seek his guidance and direction in our sacred assignment as parents. He said, ‘This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man’ (Moses 1:39). This seems to me to best sum up the important role that mortal parents have in the great eternal plan of life for each member of our families” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1978, 99; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 66).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“I am deeply moved that God finds His ultimate purpose and meaning in being a parent” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 47; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 36).

Elder J. Richard Clarke

“Throughout the ages, evil forces have attacked the family. Why do you suppose Satan is so obsessed with its dissolution? Because it stands for everything he wants and cannot have. He cannot be a husband, a father, or a grandfather. He cannot have posterity now or ever. Satan cannot even keep those he has led away from God. He has no eternal kingdom or inheritance” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 74; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 60).

The Joy of Parenthood

President Spencer W. Kimball

“We agree with Pestalozzi:

“Our home joys are the most delightful earth affords, and the joy of parents in their children is the most holy joy of humanity. It makes their hearts pure and good. It lifts them up to their Father in Heaven.’

“You and I well understand that this great, superior joy lies well within the realm of every set of parents, if they have properly performed their marriage and their family responsibilities and if high ideals of marriage and family life have prevailed” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 159; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 108).

President N. Eldon Tanner

“I can think of nothing sweeter than a home where a man is living his religion, magnifying his priesthood, with his wife supporting him in every way, where love and harmony exists, and where together they are trying to raise a family of righteous sons and daughters whom they can take back into the presence of their Heavenly Father. This may sound like an impossible dream, but I can assure you that there are thousands of such families within the Church, and it is something that can be a reality for every one of us as we accept and live the teachings of Jesus Christ. How fortunate a child is to live in such a home, and how great will be the joy of the parents in their posterity!” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 127; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 10).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“The ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home and that the family can continue through eternity. All Christian doctrine is formulated to protect the individual, the home, and the family” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 17; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 15).

Elder James E. Faust

“While few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents, few opportunities offer greater potential for joy. Surely no more important work is to be done in this world than preparing our children to be God-fearing, happy, honorable, and productive. Parents will find no more fulfilling happiness than to

have their children honor them and their teachings. It is the glory of parenthood. John testified, 'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth' (3 John 1:4)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 32–33).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

"The commandment to honor our parents echoes the sacred spirit of family relationships in which—at their best—we have sublime expressions of heavenly love and care for one another. We sense the importance of these relationships when we realize that our greatest expressions of joy or pain in mortality come from the members of our families" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 17; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 15).

Teaching Children the Gospel

President Ezra Taft Benson

"These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

"We have not been using the Book of Mormon as we should. Our homes are not as strong unless we are using it to bring our children to Christ" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 65).

"We encourage parents to teach their children fundamental spiritual principles that will instill faith in God" ("Righteousness Exalteth a Nation," 5).

"What should we teach? The Lord has revealed the specific curriculum that parents should teach. Hear His words: 'Teach . . . unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence.' (Moses 6:57.)

"As further noted in this revelation, the fundamental doctrines consist of the doctrine of the Fall, the mission of Christ and His atonement, and the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, which include faith in Christ, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost as the means to a sanctified life (see Moses

6:58–59)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 48; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 36).

President N. Eldon Tanner

"Parents also should teach their children early in life the glorious concept and fact that they are spirit children of God, and that choosing to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ is the only way to enjoy success and happiness here and eternal life hereafter. They must be taught that Satan is real and that he will use all agencies at his disposal to tempt them to do wrong, to lead them astray, make them his captives, and keep them from the supreme happiness and exaltation they could otherwise enjoy" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 58; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 8).

President Marion G. Romney

"There is another reason why we should read the Book of Mormon: By doing so we will fill and refresh our minds with a constant flow of that 'water' which Jesus said would be in us 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (John 4:14). We must obtain a continuing supply of this water if we are to resist evil and retain the blessings of being born again. . . .

"I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 88, 90; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 66–67).

Elder Mark E. Petersen

"What will parents barter for the souls of their little children, these tiny ones who are given into their care by the Almighty himself, to whom they should teach the principles of righteousness, and whom these parents should lead into the proper pathways of life?" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 142; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 111).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“At the time I was a new parent, President David O. McKay presided over the Church. His counsel was clear and direct regarding our responsibilities to our children. He taught us the most precious gift a man and woman can receive is a child of God, and that the raising of a child is basically, fundamentally, and most exclusively a *spiritual* process.

“He directed us to basic principles we need to teach our children. The first and most important inner quality you can instill in a child is *faith in God*. The first and most important action a child can learn is *obedience*. And the most powerful tool you have with which to teach a child is *love*. (See *Instructor*, Dec. 1949, p. 620)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 106; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 78).

Elder David B. Haight

“We are to teach and train our children in the ways of the Lord. Children should not be left to their own devices in learning character and family values, or in listening to and watching unsupervised music or television or movies as a means of gaining knowledge and understanding as to how to live their lives!

“The Lord has clearly commanded that parents are to teach their children to do good (see Alma 39:12) and to teach them ‘the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, [or] the sin [shall] be upon the heads of the parents. . . .’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 105; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 75–76).

Elder James E. Faust

“A principal purpose for discipline is to teach obedience. President David O. McKay stated: ‘Parents who fail to teach obedience to their children, if [their] homes do not develop obedience society will demand it and get it. It is therefore better for the home, with its kindness, sympathy and understanding, to train the child in obedience rather than callously to leave him to the brutal and unsympathetic discipline that society will impose if the home has not already fulfilled its obligation’ (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children*, p. 3)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 41–42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 34).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“They are to teach and guide their children ‘by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, . . . reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love’ (D&C 121:41–43). Parents then will earn the respect of their children, and children will honor their parents, unifying families” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 87–88; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 71).

Elder H. Verlan Andersen

“Although the Lord chastised the leading brethren, and indeed all parents in Zion, for parental delinquency, he indicated that repentance is possible. But he also said that if we did not repent, we would be removed out of our place. (See D&C 93:41–50.)

“Not only do the scriptures instruct us on when teaching is best done (see D&C 68:25–32; Deuteronomy 8:5–9) but also on what should and should not be taught (see Moroni 7:14–19; 2 Nephi 9:28–29) and who should and should not do the teaching (see 2 Nephi 28:14, 31; Mosiah 23:14)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 81).

Bishop Robert D. Hales

“My father taught me respect for the priesthood. While serving in the Aaronic Priesthood, we passed the sacrament using stainless steel sacrament trays which, as a result of spilled water, were often dulled with hard water spots. As a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood, I was responsible for helping prepare the sacrament. Father asked me to bring home the trays, and together we cleaned them with steel wool until every tray sparkled. When I passed the sacrament, I knew we had participated in making the sacrament ordinance a little more sacred. . . .

“I learned respect for womanhood from my father’s tender caring for my mother, my sister, and his sisters. Father was the first to arise from dinner to clear the table. My sister and I would wash and dry the dishes each night at Father’s request. If we were not there, Father and Mother would clean the kitchen together” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 9).

Teaching Children to Work

Doctrine and Covenants 68:31–32

“Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness.

“These things ought not to be, and must be done away from among them; wherefore, let my servant Oliver Cowdery carry these sayings unto the land of Zion.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“*Work together.* I do not know how many generations or centuries ago someone first said, ‘An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.’ Children need to work with their parents, to wash dishes with them, to mop floors with them, to mow lawns, to prune trees” (“Four Simple Things to Help Our Families and Our Nations,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 7).

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

“‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread’ is not outdated counsel. It is basic to personal welfare. One of the greatest favors parents can do for their children is to teach them to work. Much has been said over the years about children and monthly allowances, and opinions and recommendations vary greatly. I’m from the ‘old school.’ I believe children should earn their money needs through service and appropriate chores. Some financial rewards to children may also be tied to educational effort and the accomplishment of other worthwhile goals. I think it is unfortunate for a child to grow up in a home where the seed is planted in the child’s mind that there is a family money tree that automatically drops ‘green stuff’ once a week or once a month” (*One for the Money*, 8).

Elder James E. Faust

“An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to

work. As we grow up, many of us are like the man who said, ‘I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours’ (Jerome Klapka Jerome, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, and Thomas C. Jones [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 782). Again, the best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, ‘act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon?’ (2 Nephi 2:26)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 34).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

“The remarks of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., given fifty-six years ago, are instructive today. He said: ‘It is the eternal, inescapable law that growth comes only from work and preparation, whether the growth be material, mental, or spiritual. Work has no substitute’ (in Conference Report, Apr. 1933, p. 103). More recently, Elder Howard W. Hunter counseled: ‘The first recorded instruction given to Adam after the Fall dealt with the eternal principle of work. The Lord said: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” (Gen. 3:19.) Our Heavenly Father loves us so completely that he has given us a commandment to work. This is one of the keys to eternal life. He knows that we will learn more, grow more, achieve more, serve more, and benefit more from a life of industry than from a life of ease’ (*Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 122)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 9; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 8).

Elder Joe J. Christensen

“*Teach your children to work and to take responsibility.* Especially in urban settings, too many children are growing up in an environment where they do not have enough to do. They are like the young thirteen-year-old boy who was asked what he did all day in the summer.

“He said, ‘Well, I get up in the morning about ten or eleven. Then my mom gets me something to eat. Then maybe I’ll go with some of the guys and play

a little basketball, maybe watch TV, and then go down to the mall and “hang out” for a while—sorta watch the girls and stuff.’ . . .

“I like what President Spencer W. Kimball has said on this topic:

“We want you parents to create work for your children” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 12).

A Father’s Duty

President Howard W. Hunter

See “Being a Righteous Husband and Father” on pages 206–9.

Elder James E. Faust

“I hasten to acknowledge that there are too many husbands and fathers who are abusive to their wives and children and from whom the wives and children need protection. Yet modern sociological studies powerfully reaffirm the essential influence of a caring father in the life of a child—boy or girl. In the past twenty years, as homes and families have struggled to stay intact, sociological studies reveal this alarming fact: much of the crime and many of the behavioral disorders in the United States come from homes where the father has abandoned the children. In many societies the world over, child poverty, crime, drug abuse, and family decay can be traced to conditions where the father gives no male nurturing. Sociologically it is now painfully apparent that fathers are not optional family baggage.

“We need to honor the position of the father as the primary provider for physical and spiritual support. I state this with no reluctance because the Lord has revealed that this obligation is placed upon husbands. ‘Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken’ (D&C 83:2). Further, ‘All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age’ (D&C 83:4). In addition, their spiritual welfare should be ‘brought to pass by the faith and covenant of their fathers’ (D&C 84:99). As regards little children, the Lord has promised that ‘great things may be required at the hands of their fathers’ (D&C 29:48).

“It is useless to debate which parent is most important. No one would doubt that a mother’s

influence is paramount with newborns and in the first years of a child’s life. The father’s influence increases as the child grows older. However, each parent is necessary at various times in a child’s development. Both fathers and mothers do many intrinsically different things for their children. Both mothers and fathers are equipped to nurture children, but their approaches are different. Mothers seem to take a dominant role in preparing children to live within their families, present and future. Fathers seem best equipped to prepare children to function in the environment outside the family.

Both mothers and fathers are equipped to nurture children, but their approaches are different.

“One authority states: ‘Studies show that fathers have a special role to play in building a child’s self-respect. They are important, too, in ways we really don’t understand, in developing internal limits and controls in children.’ He continues: ‘Research also shows that fathers are critical in establishment of gender in children. Interestingly, fatherly involvement produces stronger sexual identity and

character in both boys and girls. It is well established that the masculinity of sons and the femininity of daughters are each greater when fathers are active in family life’ (Karl Zinsmeister, “Do Children Need Fathers?” *Crisis*, Oct. 1992).

“Parents in any marital situation have a duty to set aside personal differences and encourage each other’s righteous influence in the lives of their children. . . .

“Perhaps we regard the power bestowed by Elijah as something associated only with formal ordinances performed in sacred places. But these ordinances become dynamic and productive of good only as they reveal themselves in our daily lives. Malachi said that the power of Elijah would turn the *hearts* of the fathers and the children to each other. The heart is the seat of the emotions and a conduit for revelation (see Malachi 4:5–6). This sealing power thus reveals itself in family relationships, in attributes and virtues developed in a nurturing environment, and in loving service. These are the cords that bind families together, and the priesthood advances their development. In imperceptible but real ways, the ‘doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul [and thy home] as the dews from heaven’ (D&C 121:45).

“I so testify that the blessings of the priesthood, honored by fathers and husbands and revered by

wives and children, can indeed cure the cancer that plagues our society. I plead with you, Fathers, come home. Magnify your priesthood calling; bless your families through this sacred influence, and experience the rewards promised by our Father and God. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 44–45, 47; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 35, 37).

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio

“In ancient times a fortress required regular inspections to ensure that no weak spots developed that an enemy could take advantage of, and guards in the watchtowers ensured that no enemy could approach undetected. In other words, once a city was fortified, a constant effort was made to maintain the fortress so that it could serve its purpose.

“By establishing a security system of our own, we can prevent the enemy from finding and exploiting weaknesses in our family fortress through which he could gain access to, and harm, our most precious treasure, our family.

“One of the watchtowers on our fortress can be the regular habit of a father’s interview with each member of his family. Personal interviews are an important resource in maintaining the integrity of our fortress. Through them we become better acquainted with our children, learn about their problems and concerns, and establish open communication and trust that will enable us to foresee any danger, help them make decisions, and support them during difficult times. Our Heavenly Father has given us as parents the stewardship of caring for and protecting our families. It is a responsibility that we cannot and must not delegate.

“In Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verses 39 and 40, it says:

““And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

““But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.’

“A loving interview guided by the Spirit can give direction to our children’s lives, bring about necessary adjustments or changes, and may even result in miracles” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 29–30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 23–24).

A Mother’s Duty

President David O. McKay

“Motherhood consists of three principal attributes or qualities: namely, (1) the power to bear, (2) the ability to rear, (3) the gift to love. . . .

“This ability and willingness properly to rear children, the gift to love, and eagerness, yes, longing to express it in soul development, make motherhood the noblest office or calling in the world” (*Gospel Ideals*, 453).

See President Spencer W. Kimball’s quotation on page 237.

See President Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* on pages 352–57.

See President Gordon B. Hinckley’s quotation on page 77.

See President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Women of the Church,” on pages 357–60.

See Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” on pages 259–63.

See “The Divine Work of Women” on pages 347–49.

Disciplining with Love

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“Love is the very essence of family life. Why is it that the children we love become so frequently the targets of our harsh words? Why is it that these children who love their fathers and mothers sometimes speak as if with daggers that cut to the quick? ‘There is beauty all around,’ *only* ‘when there’s love at home’ (*Hymns*, no. 294)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 83; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 67).

Elder James E. Faust

“To have successful homes, values must be taught, and there must be rules, there must be standards, and there must be absolutes. Many societies give parents very little support in teaching and honoring moral values. A number of cultures are becoming essentially valueless, and many of the younger people in those societies are becoming moral cynics. . . .

“. . . Child rearing is so individualistic. Every child is different and unique. What works with one may not work with another. I do not know who is wise enough to say what discipline is too harsh or what

is too lenient except the parents of the children themselves, who love them most. It is a matter of prayerful discernment for the parents. Certainly the overarching and undergirding principle is that the discipline of children must be motivated more by love than by punishment. . . . Direction and discipline are, however, certainly an indispensable part of child rearing. If parents do not discipline their children, then the public will discipline them in a way the parents do not like. Without discipline, children will not respect either the rules of the home or of society” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 40–41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 32–34).

Elder Ben B. Banks

“*Discipline with love.* “Discipline” and “punishment” are not synonymous. Punishment suggests hurting, paying someone back for a wrong committed. Discipline implies an action directed toward a goal . . . of helping the recipient to improve himself” (William E. Homan, ‘How to Be a Better Parent,’ *Reader’s Digest*, Oct. 1969, p. 188). Discipline should always be with love” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 29).

Personal Righteousness Prepares Parents

President Brigham Young

“No man can ever become a ruler in the Kingdom of God, until he can perfectly rule himself; then is he capable of raising a family of children who will rise up and call him blessed” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 265).

President Ezra Taft Benson

“Setting your home in order is keeping the commandments of God. This brings harmony and love in the home between you and your companion and between you and your children. It is daily family prayer. It is teaching your family to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is each family member keeping the commandments of God. It is you and your companion being worthy to receive a temple recommend, all family members receiving the ordinances of exaltation, and your family being sealed together for eternity. It is being free from excessive debt, with family members paying honest tithes and offerings” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 48–49; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 36).

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“*Pray together.* Is prayer such a difficult thing? Would it be so hard to encourage fathers and mothers to get on their knees with their little children and address the throne of Deity to express gratitude for blessings, to pray for those in distress . . . ? How mighty a thing is prayer” (“Four Simple Things to Help Our Families and Our Nations,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 8).

“Your children will know the security of a home where dwells the Spirit of the Lord. . . . They will grow up with a sense of appreciation, having heard their parents in prayer express gratitude for blessings great and small. They will mature with faith in the living God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 83; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 72).

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Elder Boyd K. Packer

“Parents, can we first consider the most painful part of your problem? If you want to reclaim your son or daughter, why don’t you leave off trying to alter your child just for a little while and concentrate on yourself. The changes must begin with you, not with your children.

“You can’t continue to do what you have been doing (even though you thought it was right) and expect to unproduce some behavior in your child, when your conduct was one of the things that produced it.

“There! It’s been said! After all the evading, all the concern for wayward children. After all the blaming of others, the care to be gentle with parents. It’s out!

“It’s you, not the child, that needs immediate attention.

“Now parents, there is substantial help for you if you will accept it. I add with emphasis that the help we propose is not easy, for the measures are equal to the seriousness of your problem. There is no patent medicine to effect an immediate cure.

“And parents, if you seek for a cure that ignores faith and religious doctrine, you look for a cure where it never will be found. When we talk of religious principles and doctrines and quote scripture, interesting, isn’t it, how many don’t feel comfortable with talk like that. But when we talk

about your problems with your family and offer a solution, then your interest is intense.

“Know that you can’t talk about one without talking about the other, and expect to solve your problems. Once parents know that there is a God and that we are his children, they can face problems like this and win.

“If you are helpless, he is not.

“If you are lost, he is not.

“If you don’t know what to do next, he knows.

“It would take a miracle, you say?

“Well, if it takes a miracle, why not” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 119–20).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

“Small equivocations in parents can produce large deviations in their children!” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 89; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 66).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“Modern revelation commands parents to ‘teach their children to pray’ (D&C 68:28). This requires parents to learn and pray with the special language of prayer. We learn our native language simply by listening to those who speak it. This is also true of the language with which we address our Heavenly Father. The language of prayer is easier and sweeter to learn than any other tongue. We should give our children the privilege of learning this language by listening to their parents use it in the various prayers offered daily in our homes” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 20; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 18).

Spending Time with Children

President Howard W. Hunter

“Effective family leadership, brethren, requires both quantity and quality time. The teaching and governance of the family must not be left to your wife alone, to society, to school, or even to the Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Thomas S. Monson

“So frequently we mistakenly believe that our children need more things, when in reality their silent pleadings are simply for more of our time. The accumulation of wealth or the multiplication of assets belies the Master’s teaching:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 80; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 62).

Elder James E. Faust

“The little things are the big things sewn into the family tapestry by a thousand threads of love, faith, discipline, sacrifice, patience, and work” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 35).

Elder L. Tom Perry

“There are two areas I would determine to improve if that privilege were granted to me to have young children in our home once again.

“The first would be to spend more time as husband and wife in a family executive committee meeting learning, communicating, planning, and organizing to better fulfill our roles as parents.

“The second wish I would like, if I could have those years over, would be to spend more family time” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 49; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 37).

“Build traditions in your families that will bring you together, for they can demonstrate your devotion, love, and support for one another. For each of the members of your family, these events would include blessings of children, baptisms, other priesthood ordinances, graduations, missionary farewells, homecomings, and, of course, marriages. If distance, missions, or ill health prevent personal reunions, write one of those special letters that will be treasured in family histories. Sharing these occasions as a family will help us build a foundation established upon a rock” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 29; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 23).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

See quotation on page 242.

Elder A. Theodore Tuttle

“Prepare now! Take steps now to strengthen your family. Spend time together. Establish and maintain family traditions that build happy memories” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 39; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 28).

Elder Ben B. Banks

“Do things together. Vacations, recreational activities, and family work projects give parents good opportunities to teach the importance of developing a good work ethic. Doing things together gives a child and parent an opportunity to share their attention in a common objective” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 29).

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IN THE WORLD—GOOD PARENTING

*Elder James E. Faust
Of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
In Conference Report,
Oct. 1990, 39–43;
or Ensign, Nov.
1990, 32–35*

Being a Parent Is a Divine Calling

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I ask for your faith and prayers this afternoon as I feel moved upon to discuss a subject which I have chosen to call the greatest challenge in the world. It has to do with the privilege and responsibility of being good parents. On this subject there are about as many opinions as there are parents, yet there are few who claim to have all of the answers. I am certainly not one of them.

I feel that there are more outstanding young men and women among our people at present than at any other moment in my lifetime. This presupposes that most of these fine young people have come from good homes and have committed, caring parents. Even so, the most conscientious parents feel that they may have made some mistakes. One time, when I did a thoughtless thing, I remember my own mother exclaiming, “Where did I fail?”

The Lord has directed, “Bring up your children in light and truth” (D&C 93:40). To me, there is no more important human effort.

Being a father or a mother is not only a great challenge, it is a divine calling. It is an effort requiring consecration. President David O. McKay stated that being parents is “the greatest trust that

has been given to human beings” (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children* [pamphlet, n.d.], p. 1).

Creating Successful Homes

While few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents, few opportunities offer greater potential for joy. Surely no more important work is to be done in this world than preparing our children to be God-fearing, happy, honorable, and productive. Parents will find no more fulfilling happiness than to have their children honor them and their teachings. It is the glory of parenthood. John testified, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). In my opinion, the teaching, rearing, and training of children requires more intelligence, intuitive understanding, humility, strength, wisdom, spirituality, perseverance, and hard work than any other challenge we might have in life. This is especially so when moral foundations of honor and decency are eroding around us. To have successful homes, values must be taught, and there must be rules, there must be standards, and there must be absolutes. Many societies give parents very little support in teaching and honoring moral values. A number of cultures are becoming essentially valueless, and many of the younger people in those societies are becoming moral cynics.

To have successful homes, values must be taught.

As societies as a whole have decayed and lost their moral identity and so many homes are broken, the best hope is to turn greater attention and effort to the teaching of the next generation—our children. In order to do this, we must first reinforce the primary teachers of children. Chief among these are the parents and other family members, and the best environment should be in the home. Somehow, some way, we must try harder to make our homes stronger so that they will stand as sanctuaries against the unwholesome, pervasive moral dry rot around us. Harmony, happiness, peace, and love in the home can help give children the required inner strength to cope with life’s challenges. Barbara Bush, wife of President George Bush, a few months ago said to the graduates of Wellesley College:

“But whatever the era, whatever the times, one thing will never change: Fathers and mothers, if you have children, they must come first. You must read to your children and you must hug your

children and you must love your children. Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House but on what happens inside your house" (*Washington Post*, 2 June 1990, p. 2).

To be a good father and mother requires that the parents defer many of their own needs and desires in favor of the needs of their children. As a consequence of this sacrifice, conscientious parents develop a nobility of character and learn to put into practice the selfless truths taught by the Savior Himself.

I have the greatest respect for single parents who struggle and sacrifice, trying against almost superhuman odds to hold the family together. They should be honored and helped in their heroic efforts. But any mother's or father's task is much easier where there are two functioning parents in the home. Children often challenge and tax the strength and wisdom of both parents. . . .

Parents Must Set the Example

When parents try to teach their children to avoid danger, it is no answer for parents to say to their children, We are experienced and wise in the ways of the world, and we can get closer to the edge of the cliff than you. Parental hypocrisy can make children cynical and unbelieving of what they are taught in the home. For instance, when parents attend movies they forbid their children to see, parental credibility is diminished. If children are expected to be honest, parents must be honest. If children are expected to be virtuous, parents must be virtuous. If you expect your children to be honorable, you must be honorable.

Among the other values children should be taught are respect for others, beginning with the child's own parents and family; respect for the symbols of faith and patriotic beliefs of others; respect for law and order; respect for the property of others; respect for authority. Paul reminds us that children should "learn first to shew piety at home" (1 Timothy 5:4).

Disciplining Children

One of the most difficult parental challenges is to appropriately discipline children. Child rearing is so individualistic. Every child is different and unique. What works with one may not work with another. I do not know who is wise enough to say what discipline is too harsh or what is too lenient except

the parents of the children themselves, who love them most. It is a matter of prayerful discernment for the parents. Certainly the overarching and undergirding principle is that the discipline of children must be motivated more by love than by punishment. Brigham Young counseled, "If you are ever called upon to chasten a person, never chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:124–25). Direction and discipline are, however, certainly an indispensable part of child rearing. If parents do not discipline their children, then the public will discipline them in a way the parents do not like. Without discipline, children will not respect either the rules of the home or of society.

A principal purpose for discipline is to teach obedience. President David O. McKay stated: "Parents who fail to teach obedience to their children, if [their] homes do not develop obedience society will demand it and get it. It is therefore better for the home, with its kindness, sympathy and understanding to train the child in obedience rather than callously to leave him to the brutal and unsympathetic discipline that society will impose if the home has not already fulfilled its obligation" (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children*, p. 3).

Teaching Children to Work

An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to work. As we grow up, many of us are like the man who said, "I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours" (Jerome Klapka Jerome, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, and Thomas C. Jones [Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1969], p. 782). Again, the best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, "act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon"? (2 Nephi 2:26).

Luther Burbank, one of the world's greatest horticulturists, said, "If we had paid no more attention to our plants than we have to our children,

we would now be living in a jungle of weeds” (in *Elbert Hubbard’s Scrap Book* [New York: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1923], p. 227).

Special Challenges for Parents

Children are also beneficiaries of moral agency by which we are all afforded the opportunity to progress, grow, and develop. That agency also permits children to pursue the alternate choice of selfishness, wastefulness, self-indulgence, and self-destruction. Children often express this agency when very young.

Let parents who have been conscientious, loving, and concerned and who have lived the principles of righteousness as best they could be comforted in knowing that they are good parents despite the actions of some of their children. The children themselves have a responsibility to listen, obey, and, having been taught, to learn. Parents cannot always answer for all their children’s misconduct because they cannot ensure the children’s good behavior. Some few children could tax even Solomon’s wisdom and Job’s patience.

There is often a special challenge for those parents who are affluent or overly indulgent. In a sense, some children in those circumstances hold their parents hostage by withholding their support of parental rules unless the parents acquiesce to the children’s demands. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, “Those who do too much *for* their children will soon find they can do nothing *with* their children. So many children have been so much *done for* they are almost *done in*” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 150; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 101). It seems to be human nature that we do not fully appreciate material things we have not ourselves earned.

There is a certain irony in the fact that some parents are so anxious for their children to be accepted by and be popular with their peers; yet these same parents fear that their children may be doing the things their peers are doing.

Helping Children Internalize Values

Generally, those children who make the decision and have the resolve to abstain from drugs, alcohol, and illicit sex are those who have adopted and internalized the strong values of their homes as lived by their parents. In times of difficult decisions they are most likely to follow the teachings of their parents rather than the example of their peers or the

sophistries of the media which glamorize alcohol consumption, illicit sex, infidelity, dishonesty, and other vices. They are like Helaman’s two thousand young men who “had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” from death (Alma 56:47). “And they rehearsed . . . the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (56:48).

What seems to help cement parental teachings and values in place in children’s lives is a firm belief in Deity. When this belief becomes part of their very souls, they have inner strength. So, of all that is important to be taught, what should parents teach? The scriptures tell us that parents are to teach their children “faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost,” and “the doctrine of repentance” (D&C 68:25). These truths must be taught in the home. They cannot be taught in the public schools, nor will they be fostered by the government or by society. Of course, Church programs can help, but the most effective teaching takes place in the home.

A Thousand Threads of Love

Parental teaching moments need not be big or dramatic or powerful. We learn this from the Master Teacher. Charles Henry Parkhurst said:

“The completed beauty of Christ’s life is only the added beauty of little inconspicuous acts of beauty—talking with the woman at the well; . . . showing the young ruler the stealthy ambition laid away in his heart that kept him out of the kingdom of Heaven; . . . teaching a little knot of followers how to pray; . . . kindling a fire and broiling fish that his disciples might have a breakfast waiting for them when they came ashore from a night of fishing, cold, tired, and discouraged. All of these things, you see, let us in so easily into the real quality and tone of [Christ’s] interests, so specific, so narrowed down, so enlisted in what is small, so engrossed with what is minute” (“Kindness and Love,” in *Leaves of Gold* [Honesdale, Pa.: Coslet Publishing Co., 1938], p. 177).

And so it is with being parents. The little things are the big things sewn into the family tapestry by a thousand threads of love, faith, discipline, sacrifice, patience, and work.

Children of the Covenant

There are some great spiritual promises which may help faithful parents in this church. Children of eternal sealings may have visited upon them the divine promises made to their valiant forebears who nobly kept their covenants. Covenants remembered by parents will be remembered by God. The children may thus become the beneficiaries and inheritors of these great covenants and promises. This is because they are the children of the covenant (see Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, pp. 110–11).

God bless the struggling, sacrificing, honorable parents of this world. May He especially honor the covenants kept by faithful parents among our people and watch over these children of the covenant. I pray that this may be so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.