

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

Of the Council of the Twelve

● As a people, we have three great loyalties: loyalty to God, loyalty to family, loyalty to country.

I come to you today with a plea to strengthen our families.

The family unit

It has been truly stated that "salvation is a family affair . . . and that the family unit is the most important organization in time or in eternity."

The Church was created in large measure to help the family, and long after the Church has performed its mission, the celestial patriarchal order will still be functioning. This is why President Joseph F. Smith said: "To be a successful father or a successful mother is greater than to be a successful general or a successful statesman . . ." and President McKay added: "When one puts business or pleasure above his home, he, that moment, starts on the downgrade to soul weakness."

And this is why President Harold B. Lee said only yesterday, "The Church must do more to help the home carry out its divine mission."

Temptations and pitfalls

President Joseph Fielding Smith has stated that never "in the history of the Church have there been so many temptations, so many pitfalls, so many dangers, to lure away the members of the Church from the path of duty and from righteousness as we find today." (*Take Heed to Yourselves*, p. 127.) And he has also said: "This world is not growing better . . . wickedness is increasing." (*Ibid.*, p. 207.)

Never has the devil been so well organized, and never in our day has he had so many powerful emissaries working for him. We must do everything in our power to strengthen and safeguard the home and family.

The adversary knows "that the home is the first and most effective place for children to learn the lessons of life:

truth, honor, virtue, self-control; the value of education, honest work, and the purpose and privilege of life. Nothing can take the place of home in rearing and teaching children, and no other success can compensate for failure in the home." (President David O. McKay, in *Family Home Evening Manual*, 1968-69, p. iii.)

Undermining of home

And so today, the undermining of the home and family is on the increase, with the devil anxiously working to displace the father as the head of the home and create rebellion among the children. The Book of Mormon describes this condition when it states, "And my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them." And then these words follow—and consider these words seriously when you think of those political leaders who are promoting birth control and abortion: "O my people, they who lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths." (2 Ne. 13:12.) And let me warn the sisters in all seriousness that you who submit yourselves to an abortion or to an operation that precludes you from safely having additional healthy children are jeopardizing your exaltation and your future membership in the kingdom of God.

Responsibility of parents

Parents are directly responsible for the righteous rearing of their children, and this responsibility cannot be safely delegated to relatives, friends, neighbors, the school, the church, or the state.

"I appeal to you parents, take nothing for granted about your children," said President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. "The great bulk of them, of course, are good, but some of us do not know when they begin to go away from the path of truth and righteousness. Be watchful every day and hour. Never relax your care, your solicitude. Rule kindly

in the spirit of the Gospel and the spirit of the priesthood, but rule, if you wish your children to follow the right path." Permissive parents are part of the problem.

False educational ideas

As a watchman on the tower, I feel to warn you that one of the chief means of misleading our youth and destroying the family unit is our educational institutions. President Joseph F. Smith referred to false educational ideas as one of the three threatening dangers among our Church members. There is more than one reason why the Church is advising our youth to attend colleges close to their homes where institutes of religion are available. It gives the parents the opportunity to stay close to their children; and if they have become alert and informed as President McKay admonished us last year, these parents can help expose some of the deceptions of men like Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, John Dewey, Karl Marx, John Keynes, and others.

Today there are much worse things that can happen to a child than not getting a full college education. In fact, some of the worst things have happened to our children while attending colleges led by administrators who wink at subversion and amorality.

Said Karl G. Maeser, "I would rather have my child exposed to smallpox, typhus fever, cholera, or other malignant and deadly diseases than to the degrading influence of a corrupt teacher. It is infinitely better to take chances with an ignorant, but pure-minded teacher than with the greatest philosopher who is impure."

Vocational education, correspondence courses, establishment in a family business are being considered for their children by an increasing number of parents.

Propagation of atheism

The tenth plank in Karl Marx's Manifesto for destroying our kind of civilization advocated the establishment of "free education for all children in public schools." There were sev-

eral reasons why Marx wanted government to run the schools. Dr. A. A. Hodge pointed out one of them when he said, "It is capable of exact demonstration that if every party in the State has the right of excluding from public schools whatever he does not believe to be true, then he that believes most must give way to him that believes least, and then he that believes least must give way to him that believes absolutely nothing, no matter in how small a minority the atheists or agnostics may be. It is self-evident that on this scheme, if it is consistently and persistently carried out in all parts of the country, the United States system of national popular education will be the most efficient and widespread instrument for the propagation of atheism which the world has ever seen."

After the tragic prayer decision was made by the Court, President David O. McKay stated, "The Supreme Court of the United States severs the connecting cord between the public schools of the United States and the source of divine intelligence, the Creator, himself." (*Relief Society Magazine*, December 1962, p. 878.)

Does that make any difference to you? Can't you see why the demand of conscientious parents is increasing the number of private Christian and Americanist oriented schools?

Today, Brigham Young University is the largest private school in the United States. Parents from far and near are looking to Brigham Young University as never before.

Supervision by parents

Now, whether your child attends this type of school or not, it is important that you stay close to your children, daily review, if possible, what they have learned in school, and go over their textbooks.

President Joseph Fielding Smith has stated that in public schools you cannot get a textbook, anywhere that he knows of, on the "ologies" that doesn't contain nonsense. (*Take Heed to Yourselves*, p. 32.)

I know one noble father who reviews

with his children regularly what they have been taught; and if they have been taught any falsehoods, then the children and the father together research out the truth. If your children are required to put down on exams the falsehoods that have been taught, then perhaps they can follow President Joseph Fielding Smith's counsel of prefacing their answer with the words "teacher says," or they might say "you taught" or "the textbook states."

If your children are taught untruths on evolution in the public schools or even in our Church schools, provide them with a copy of President Joseph Fielding Smith's excellent rebuttal in his book *Man, His Origin and Destiny*.

Open letter to school principal

Recently some parents paid for space in a newspaper to run an open letter to the school principal of their son. The letter in part stated:

"You are hereby notified that our son,, is not allowed by his undersigned parents to participate in, or be subject to instruction in, any training or education in sex, human biological development, attitude development, self-understanding, personal and family life, or group therapy, or sensitivity training, or self-criticism, or any combination or degree thereof, without the consent of the undersigned by express written permission. . . .

"We intend to retain and exercise our parental rights to guide our child in the areas of morality and sexual behavior without any interference or contradiction imposed by school personnel.

"[Our son] has been taught to recognize the format of sensitivity training, group therapy, self-criticism, etc., as it is being broadly applied, lowering the standards of morality and replacing American individual responsibility with the dependency on, and conformity to, the 'herd consensus' concept of collectivism.

"He has been instructed to promptly remove himself from any class in which he is exposed to the aforementioned indoctrination and to report to us any such disregard of this letter."

Home evening program

The Lord knew that in the last days Satan would try to destroy the family unit. He knew that by court edict, pornography would be allowed to prosper.

How grateful we should be that God inspired his prophet over half a century ago to institute the weekly home evening program. This is the vanguard for getting parents to assume the responsibility of instructing their children. An increasing number of faithful Saints are holding more than one home evening a week and are adding to or deleting from the home evening manual as the Spirit dictates.

Designed to strengthen and safeguard the family, the Church home evening program (one night each week) is to be set apart for fathers and mothers to gather their sons and daughters around them in the home. Prayer is offered, hymns and other songs are sung, scripture is read, family topics are discussed, talent is displayed, principles of the gospel are taught, and often games are played and home-made refreshments served.

Now here are the promised blessings for those who will hold a weekly home evening:

"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." (First Presidency, April 27, 1915, *Improvement Era*, vol. 18, p. 734.)

Demoralizing entertainment

Now what of the entertainment that is available to our young people today? Are you being undermined right in your home through your TV, radio, slick magazines, rock records? Much of the rock music is purposely designed to push immorality, narcotics, revolution, atheism, and nihilism, through language that often has a double meaning and with which many parents are not familiar.

Parents who are informed can warn

their children of the demoralizing, loud, raucous beat of rock music, which deadens the senses and dulls the sensibilities—the jungle rhythm which inflames the savagery within.

Said President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.: "I would have you reflect for a moment upon the fact that a tremendous amount of the modern art, of the modern literature and music, and the drama that we have today is utterly demoralizing—utterly. . . . Your music—well, I do not know how far above the tom-tom of the jungle it is, but it is not too far. . . ."

"These things you must watch. They all have their effects on the children. Make your homelife as near heaven-like as you can." (*Relief Society Magazine*, December 1952, p. 798.)

Holding aloft of standards

Youth leaders, are you holding aloft our standards or have you compromised them for the lowest common denominator in order to appease the deceived or vile within the Church? Are the dances and music in your cultural halls virtuous, lovely, praiseworthy, and of good report, or do they represent a modern Sodom with short skirts, loud beat, strobe lights, and darkness?

Will our youth leaders accept the standards set for young John Wesley by his mother? Hear her sound counsel:

"Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure? Take this rule: Now note whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, takes off your relish for spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of the body over the mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may seem in itself."

Have we, as Moroni warned, "polluted the holy church of God?" (Morm. 8:38.) The auxiliaries of the Church are to be a help, not a hindrance, to parents and the priesthood as they strive to lead their families back to God. Do any of us wear or display the broken cross, anti-Christ sign, that is

the adversary's symbol of the so-called "peace movement"?

Lack of knowledge

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," lamented Hosea. (Hos. 4:6.) Today, because some parents have refused to become informed and then stand up and inform their children, they are witnessing the gradual physical and spiritual destruction of their posterity. If we would become like God, knowing good and evil, then we had best find out what is undermining us, how to avoid it, and what we can do about it.

It is time that the hearts of us fathers be turned to our children and the hearts of the children be turned to us fathers, or we shall both be cursed. The seeds of divorce are often sown and the blessings of children delayed by wives working outside the home. Working mothers should remember that their children usually need more of mother than of money.

Family solidarity

As conditions in the world get progressively worse, it is crucial that the family draw closer together in righteousness and that family solidarity be established. As one has said, "There are too many pulls away from the home today. We should seriously consider whether or not too many activities and other interests take too much time and attention from our families, from our children, from those whom the Lord God gave us to love, to nourish, to teach, and to help through life."

The stick-together families are happier by far

Than the brothers and the sisters who take separate highways are.

The gladdest people living are the wholesome folks who make

A circle at the fireside that no power on earth can break.

And the finest of conventions ever held beneath the sun

Are the little family gatherings when the busy day is done.

There are rich folk, there are poor folk,
who imagine they are wise.

And they're very quick to shatter all
the little family ties.

Each goes searching after pleasure in
his own selected way.

Each with strangers likes to wander,
and with strangers likes to play.

But it's bitterness they harvest, and it's
empty joy they find,

For the children that are wisest are the
stick-together kind.

There are some who seem to fancy
that for gladness they must roam,

That for smiles that are the brightest
they must wander far from home.

That the strange friend is the true
friend, and they travel far astray

And they waste their lives in striving
for a joy that's far away,

But the gladdest sort of people, when
the busy day is done,

Are the brothers and the sisters, who
together share their fun.

It's the stick-together family that wins
the joys of earth,

That hears the sweetest music and
that finds the finest mirth;

It's the old home roof that shelters all
the charm that life can give;

There you find the gladdest playground,
there the happiest spot to live.

And, O weary, wandering brother, if
contentment you would win,

Come you back unto the fireside and
be comrade with your kin.

(Adapted from a poem
by Edgar A. Guest.)

Strengthening the family

And so let's strengthen the family.
Family and individual prayer, morning
and evening, can invite the blessings of
the Lord on your household. Mealtime
provides a wonderful time to review
the activities of the day and to not only
feed the body, but to feed the spirit
as well, with members of the family
taking turns reading the scriptures,
particularly the Book of Mormon.
Nighttime is a great time for the busy
father to go to each child's bedside, to
talk with him, answer his questions,
and tell him how much he is loved.

In such homes there is no "generation
gap." This deceptive phrase is another
tool of the devil to weaken the home
and family. Children who honor their
parents and parents who love their
children can make a home a haven of
safety and a little bit of heaven.

Does this poem describe your family
gatherings?

We are all here:

Father, mother,

Sister, brother,

All who hold each other dear.

Each chair is filled, we are all at home.

Tonight, let no cold stranger come;

It must be often thus around

Our old familiar hearth we're found.

Bless, then, the meeting and the spot,

For once be every care forgot;

Let gentle peace assert her power,

And kind affection rule the hour.

We're all—all here.

(Adapted from a poem
by Charles Sprague.)

God bless us to strengthen our families
by avoiding the crafty designs of
the adversary and following the noble
ways of the Lord, so that in due time
we can report to our Heavenly Father
in his celestial home that we are all
there, father, mother, sister, brother,
all who hold each other dear. Each
chair is filled, we are all back home.

In the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen. ○

President Harold B. Lee

Thank you Brother Benson for that
excellent talk and reminder about the
responsibility of the home, and thank
all of you brethren for the excellent
addresses, and you particularly President
Smith for the timely and inspiring
keynote talk that you have given to us.

We are grateful to this beautiful
Singing Mothers chorus for furnishing