

President N. Eldon Tanner

We have just listened to Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

The congregation will please stand and join with the chorus in singing "Oh Say, What Is Truth?"

After the singing, Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Twelve, will address us.

The congregation and chorus sang "Oh Say, What is Truth?"

President Tanner

Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Council of Twelve, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder James A. Cullimore, Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder ElRay L. Christiansen

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

First of all, my brothers and sisters, let me assure you that as far as ElRay L. Christiansen is concerned, God lives, and he is a compassionate, understanding Father; and his Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth, as the Bible tells us, and offered himself and actually gave his life that we might be redeemed from the grave and might have eternal life, salvation, which to us means exaltation in the celestial world.

I testify that Joseph Smith was selected by God and Jesus Christ to restore the gospel in this day and that Joseph Fielding Smith, whom we appreciate, is one of a succession of modern-day prophets, seers, and revelators.

Successful parenthood

Now, this is a world in difficulty and trouble, but we shouldn't merely bemoan the fact. We should, as far as our powers can help us, be anxiously engaged in rectifying it. Just before we sang, I wrote this down: If you and I are to help restore this sick world to its spiritual health, we must begin at the proper place—that is, with ourselves and with our families. This we can do!

One of the most rewarding of all human undertakings is that of making a success of marriage and of rearing

children in a manner acceptable to the Lord. It calls for the best in all of us.

While many, both in and out of the Church, are eminently successful in rearing their families, it is clearly evident that there are fathers and mothers who are divesting themselves of their sacred obligation to counsel their children and to give them the parental warmth and interest that they deserve. Some parents are quite willing to let others tend, and teach, and train their most precious possessions—their children.

Did you hear the timely admonition of our president and prophet this morning, pleading for fathers to take their rightful places at the head of their households in righteousness?

Homes in serious trouble

An authenticated study shows that two million children in America live in homes where serious trouble exists between parents. Six and a half million children live with only one parent, and another million have been "farmed out" to relatives or friends or institutions.

Some worthy institutions have been developed to help improve the home and family life. But helpful as these agencies may be, I am convinced, and I believe you will agree, that there is not and never will be a better institution

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for improving the home than the home itself.

Parents cannot, without regrettable consequences, shirk the responsibility of teaching and showing their children through their example the attributes of character that lead them unhesitatingly to appreciate and accept the good, the decent, the beautiful, and help them to develop the desire and the courage to turn from that which is coarse or crude or wrong.

Family home evening

To help us develop desirable qualities in our children, we are provided with divinely given programs such as the family home evenings, and for the life of me I cannot understand why every single family in the Church doesn't grasp the opportunities provided through family home evening—it costs nothing; it isn't necessary to leave home; and yet it is one of the most effective ways of cementing the unity of our families that has ever come to us, and when consistently used, it has proven to be a marvelous means of making family life secure and meaningful.

A sacred trust

Parenthood is a sacred trust. It is an approach to the divine—a God-given privilege that, with its never-ending responsibilities, brings rich and lasting rewards.

President Joseph F. Smith made this significant statement: "The man, and the woman who are the agents, in the providence of God, to bring living souls into the world, are made before God and the heavens, as responsible for these acts as is God himself responsible for the works of his own hands. . . ." (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 342.)

A home approved of God is not merely a place where children are born, but where their coming is received with joy and gladness by parents who strive with all their abilities to help their children develop such attributes as—

1. Faith in God, along with a desire to be obedient to his commandments,
2. Respect for and obedience to the laws of the land,
3. A determination to be truthful and honest, regardless of the circumstances,
4. Unselfishness by teaching (mostly by example), along with courtesy, respect, refinement, and good manners, for surely they are part of our religion.

After all,

"The sermon for a teenage child
That proves to be most ample
Is still the one that parents teach
By setting an example."

—Hal Chadwick

Family traditions

Success in family life calls for parents who take time to enjoy their children; who read with them; who play with them; who let them participate in planning special occasions, seeking to make wholesome family traditions a proud part of family life.

The case of a young man, the father of four children, whom we called upon to speak in a stake conference in eastern Utah, emphasizes the desirability of family traditions, special occasions, and warm family relationships.

On each anniversary of their marriage, this couple planned something special to do. Now they had looked forward as a family to observing their tenth anniversary. The father arranged his vacation to cover that period of time. But suddenly it became necessary for his wife to enter the hospital for surgery. He and the children felt sorry for her because she was in the hospital. At the same time she was sad, thinking that her husband and the children would be disappointed. But when she read the little note that came with a bouquet of flowers, she felt better, for it read: "Sweetheart, ten years with you have seemed like ten days, but ten days without you have seemed like ten years." Signed, "Bill."

Petty disputations

Another essential in successful parenthood is for fathers and mothers to avoid disputations. Such situations may seem harmless to the parents, but in the eyes of their children, the two most important people in the world are in conflict, and from their limited perspective, the whole world is in trouble. Situations thus created are an indication of immaturity and weakness on the part of those involved. Someone has said that one of the most important things a father can do for his children is to love and respect their mother.

I plead with parents to rise above pettiness and to spare their children the inglorious and painful insecurity of having to endure petty disputations and offensive situations.

Avenues of communication

It is important also to keep the avenues of communication open. It is wonderful when a father or a mother will sit down with a son or a daughter and discuss a personal problem (and they have their problems, which, if we are wise, we will not minimize). There are pressures, and enticements, and even unjust accusations against which our sons and daughters need to be fortified. It is even more wonderful when, because of the love and closeness that exists, children feel no hesitancy in taking their problems to their parents.

In such heart-to-heart talks, parents will help to set objectives for their children, such as:

1. A desire and determination to live clean, virtuous lives
2. A desire to associate with those who have their same high standards and ideals
3. A determination (for boys) to live so they may receive the priesthood in worthiness
4. To prepare for and be worthy of being called on missions, perhaps establishing a savings account early in life for this purpose

5. A determination to gain an education, to learn a trade or a profession, or to master a skill (and teach them the joy of working)
6. To prepare to be worthy and desirous of marriage in the temple, thus doing things the Lord's way
7. To prepare to become, in their own right, successful homemakers

Security in the home

We talk a good deal these days about security. My brothers and sisters, there is no security that we can give our children that is more essential than the security they gain in homes where families operate as families should, according to the gospel of Jesus Christ; where families kneel and offer prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude at the beginning and at the close of each day; where keeping the commandments of God is a part of daily life. In this way, they become fortified and enabled to meet the future without frustration and without fear.

Historians almost without exception point out that one of the greatest contributing factors in the downfall of nations is the disintegration of the home and family life.

A complete rebirth of satisfactory family life is needed. It is needed even in the so-called better homes. It must begin with proper love and respect between the husband and the wife and then, by their example, transferred to their children.

Faith in God

No nation can long endure unless the great majority of its families and its homes are made secure through faith in God—an active, living faith.

In *The Scouter's Minute* [YMMIA, 1969] I found these lines:

"So long as there are homes to which men turn at close of day;
So long as there are homes where children are, where women stay—

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If love and loyalty and faith be found
across those sills—

A stricken nation can recover from its
gravest ills.

"So long as there are homes where
fires burn and there is bread [I think
that means homemade bread];

So long as there are homes where lamps
are lit and prayers are said;

Although a people falter through the
dark—and nations grope,

With God Himself back of these little
homes, we have sure hope."

To this I testify in the name of Jesus
Christ, the Lord. Amen. □

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder ElRay Christiansen, Assistant
to the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

Elder James A. Cullimore, Assis-
tant to the Twelve, will now address
us, and he will be followed by Elder
Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of
the Twelve, who will be our conclud-
ing speaker.

Elder James A. Cullimore

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

I have been greatly impressed, my
brethren and sisters, at the strength of
the testimonies that have been borne
this afternoon and this morning in
these conference sessions. I thought the
testimony of President Smith was so
firm, so strong, so certain. How can
anyone doubt! And then to have it
followed by Brother [Mark E.] Peter-
sen in his masterful way, and so sincere.
The testimonies of the other
brethren, Bishop Featherstone and
Bishop Peterson, so humble and so
certain, a testimony in their lives,
and the testimony of others that have
been given. Brother Kimball, always
so sweet and so sincere. These are
the things that are important to us
in our lives.

A valued possession

A testimony of the gospel is one of
the most valued possessions of a mem-
ber of the Church. The strength and
unity of the Church depend upon each
member so living that he comes to
know for himself that the gospel is
true.

The spiritual condition of the
membership of the Church is deter-
mined by the degree to which the mem-
bers live the gospel and are worthy of

the companionship of the Holy Spirit
in giving witness of the truth of this
great work. It would follow that the
prosperity of the Church is also
measured to a great extent by the
strength of testimonies of its members
as demonstrated by their worthiness
and righteous living.

Peter's testimony

One of the great testimonies of the
scriptures is that given by Peter as he
was brought before the judges after
having healed the lame man at the
temple gate.

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy
Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of
the people, and elders of Israel,

"If we this day be examined of the
good deed done to the impotent man,
by what means he is made whole;

"Be it known unto you all, and to
all the people of Israel, that by the
name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom
ye crucified, whom God raised from
the dead, even by him doth this man
stand here before you whole.

"This is the stone which was set
at nought of you builders, which is
become the head of the corner.

"Neither is there salvation in any
other: for there is none other name