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Several years ago I had as a special acquaintance and good friend an Aaronic Priesthood-age boy from whom I learned some of life's special lessons. He came from what we commonly refer to as a good family, but his parents seemed to take the heart of the gospel for granted. They were willing to attend most of their meetings on Sunday, if it was convenient. They were warm people and friendly—always receptive to the brethren and sisters who came to their home. But I doubt if they had family prayer very often, and I'm sure family home evening was something occasionally discussed but seldom experienced. With no real personal attention, the children were allowed to come and go as they pleased.

On one occasion my young friend told me he was sure that his parents loved him, but, oh, how he wished they cared about him! You know, to a young person there can be a difference. He said he wished just once as he went out the door they would ask him where he was going and when he would be home. He wanted them to give him some guidelines. He confessed that he wasn't always sure of the judgments that were left to him. If only they had cared enough.

Now, years later, the offspring of this family have experienced the birth of illegitimate children, divorce in their own marriages, runaways, drug addiction, and most everything else that can be tragic in our lives.

Simplicity of gospel teachings

Today I would like to visit with the parents about some concerns I believe we share together. As we read the newspapers, we become justifiably concerned over what is happening around us. There is a growing concern among our people as we see the prophecies of times past being unfolded before our very eyes. Some have a feel-

ing of frustration, anxiety, anger, and yes, even fear. But remember that Paul, in his letters to Timothy, counseled: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7.)

May I suggest that the steps we can take to dispel fear and bring peace and power are really very simple. The teachings of the gospel are not complicated. They are not hard to understand. They need not be confusing. Let us not be blinded by the craftiness of men.

Nephi once said that because of the simpleness of the way or the easiness of it, there were many who perished. (See 1 Ne. 17:41.) Jacob put it another way when he said that they became blinded because they were continually looking beyond the mark in their search for answers. (See Jac. 4:14.) They didn't believe in the simplicity of the gospel teachings.

Yes, it is true that a family beset with trials and concerns seems to be the constant pattern of our mortal existence. However true this fact may be, it need not—it must not—have an adverse influence in our lives. Children are saved and families are exalted by participating in some very simple gospel experiences.

Listen to the Lord

Let us listen to the reassuring words of the Lord as we try to analyze what we can do. He said:

"But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even *peace* in this world, and *eternal life* in the world to come." (D&C 59:23. Italics added.)

"Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me." (D&C 19:23.)

Could this be our answer? I find in these scriptures some very clear instructions and comforting promises. May I

discuss just one of many possibilities with you.

"Learn of me," he said, "and you shall have peace in me." We've spoken often of where we can best learn of him—of course it still is and always shall be in the home. This is the main purpose for which the Lord established the organization of the family and home—that therein we might teach each other, especially the little children, to love the Savior and understand and live his teachings. As you consider the importance of teaching your little ones, have you ever thought in depth on the following scriptural passage?

Do not offend little ones

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name *receiveth me*.

"But whoso shall *offend one of these little ones* which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. 18:5-6. Italics added.)

"Wo unto them; because they have *offended my little ones* they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house.

"Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them.

"They shall not have right to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them from generation to generation." (D&C 121:19-21.)

Might it not be an offense of the greatest magnitude if we don't teach them of Him, if we don't teach them to listen to His words and to walk in the meekness of His Spirit? Let us ponder that in our hearts.

Read scriptures

As we consider how we might better learn of Him and teach of Him, may I suggest one of the great blessings your family may be missing out on is the simple experience of reading the scrip-

tures together daily. We read in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house."

As I have traveled to the stakes of the Church, I have found many dedicated parents who gather their families about them daily to study the revelations of the Lord as recorded in the holy scriptures. I remember one family of 12 children who studied together daily in two groups, one for the older children and another for the younger children in their family. Think of the time and effort this has taken over the years. Think how the blessings to this family have multiplied, as many of their children have now reached adulthood and are raising young families of their own.

I was in another home where ten children, all young, were given a daily treat of the scriptures. I know of a mother, alone, with four children. She has them get ready early for bed and reads to them from the scriptures before they go to sleep each night. What a blessing for thoughtful parents to shower on their most important responsibility, their little ones. There shouldn't be—there mustn't be—one family in this Church that doesn't take the time to read from the scriptures every day. Every family can do it in their own way. I have a testimony of this.

Family experience

May I relate a personal experience from the Peterson family. Several years ago after wrestling with the problem for some time, my wife and I, sensing the urgency of our parental charge, devised a new battle plan. You see, up to that point, Satan had been winning the battle of "Should we or should we not read the scriptures together in the Peterson home?" We had tried off and on for

years with no sustained success. Our big problem was that someone or something always interrupted our schedule. With a 17-year spread in our children's ages, we felt we had a special challenge.

As we studied and prayed over it, we concluded that the best time for our family of girls to read would be when no one else wanted our time. Since the older girls had to be in seminary by 7:00 A.M., our controllable time had to be early. We decided on 6:15 in the morning. We knew it would be a challenge to get teenage support. The idea was good, but its implementation was most difficult and it still is. Our family is still struggling.

Our great new plan had its birth one hot August day in Phoenix, Arizona. My wife suggested we give them a whole month to think about it and prepare for it. We went about their mental preparation in a very positive way. The plan was to start the first day of school in early September. To their protests that it was impossible to have their heads all filled with rollers in time, or that it was not likely they would feel happy so early in the morning, or that they might be late to seminary, or not have time to eat breakfast either, we replied very cheerfully that we knew they were clever enough to cope with any minor problems that might arise.

At its announcement, we also told the girls we had been praying for guidance in this family problem. This made it easier, because they had been schooled in prayer and had been taught not to question its results.

The historic first morning finally came. My wife and I got up a little early so we would be sure to be wide awake and happy. Our initial approach must meet with success. We entered each bedroom singing and happy at the thought of the prospects before us. Purposely we went to one special bedroom first. Here slept a daughter who would be able to get up early but who couldn't wake up before noon. We sat her up in bed and then went to the others and started them all into the family room.

Some stumbled, some fell, some had to be carried in, and some slept through that first morning—and I might say through subsequent mornings too.

Little by little, we have learned over the years what reading the scriptures 15 minutes each morning can do for our family. You should know that we don't try to discuss and understand each point we read. We try to pick out only a couple of thoughts each morning to digest. You should also know we still have to struggle with the plan's performance, even though we now have only two children at our home.

Can you imagine how a parent would feel to ask a little girl, "What did King Benjamin mean when he said, 'When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God?'" (Mosiah 2:17.) And she would respond, "I suppose he means that I shouldn't be selfish and should do little things for my sisters because it makes Heavenly Father happy—and Daddy, I want him to be happy with me, so I'm going to try harder." Innumerable are the blessings that will accrue to the family that persists in this noble effort of reading the scriptures together daily.

Have peace

Remember he said, "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me." (D&C 19:23.)

This is a peace that surpasseth all understanding, a peace and a security that will support us through any time and any trial, a peace that will dispel the spirit of fear in a confused world.

May the Lord bless us with the understanding and dedication not to offend his little ones. May he strengthen us with a resolve to teach them of him in our homes through the simple experiences of the gospel. May he bless us to understand his words: "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear." (D&C 38:30.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.