

President Benson

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the singing, we shall hear from Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

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Elder Boyd K. Packer

Control through freedom

I have a message for parents about the education of your children. Several weeks ago I had in my office a four-star general and his wife; they were very impressive people. They admire the Church because of the conduct of our youth. The general's wife mentioned her children, of whom she is justly proud. But she expressed a deep concern. "Tell me," she said, "how you are able to control your youth and build such character as we have seen in your young men?"

I was interested in her use of the word 'control'. The answer, I told them, centered in the doctrines of the gospel. They were interested; so I spoke briefly of the doctrine of agency. I said we develop *control* by teaching *freedom*. Perhaps at first they thought we start at the wrong end of the subject. A four-star general is nothing if not a disciplinarian. But when one understands the gospel, it becomes very clear that the best control is self-control.

It may seem unusual at first to foster *self-control* by centering on *freedom of choice*, but it is a very sound doctrinal approach.

While either subject may be taught separately, and though they may appear at first to be opposites, they are in fact parts of the same subject.

No true freedom without responsibility

Some who do not understand the doctrinal part do not readily see the relationship between obedience and agency. And they miss one vital connection and see obedience only as restraint. They then resist the very thing that will give them true freedom. There is no true freedom without responsibility, and there is no enduring freedom without a knowledge of the truth. The Lord said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

The general quickly understood a truth that is missed even by some in the Church. Latter-day Saints are not obedient because they are compelled to be obedient. They are obedient because they know certain spiritual truths and have decided, as an expression of their own individual agency, to obey the commandments of God.

Obedient because we can see

We are the sons and daughters of God, willing followers, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and "under this head are [we] made free" (Mosiah 5:8).

Those who talk of blind obedience may appear to know many things, but they do not understand the doctrines of the gospel. There is an obedi-

ence that comes from a knowledge of the truth that transcends any external form of control. We are not obedient because we are blind, we are obedient because we can see. The best control, I repeat, is self-control.

The general knew then why we teach our children the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ and where they get the resolute determination to protect individual freedom.

Responsibility for teaching the doctrines rests upon parents.

"The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake [the] evil one. . . . I have commanded *you* to bring up *your children* in light and truth" (D&C 93:36, 37, 40; italics added).

If all your children know about the gospel is what you have taught them at home, how safe will they be? Will they reject evil because they choose to reject it?

Teach children moral and spiritual control

As a young man in the military service, I visited the ancient shrine at Nikko Kanko in Japan. There, carved into the facade of a building, are the three monkeys. One with its hands over its ears, another over its eyes, and the third over its mouth. Hear no evil; see no evil; speak no evil! That is easier said than done! It is not easy to foster self-control when the world is teaching indulgence.

Fortunately, there is very substantial help for parents. Unfortunately, some families overlook it.

Several years ago I attended a seminary graduation in Hawaii. A handsome young Hawaiian athlete was being honored. He had been blessed with a well-formed body, and he had excelled in several sports. As athletes often are, he was well known both in and out of the Church. His athletic coaches had trained him for the most part in the coordination of his physical

powers, adding a little on such virtues as determination and courage.

He said it had not been difficult for him to achieve athletically. If he practiced and kept the training rules, the muscles of his body responded as he wished and he had coordination and control.

Then he talked of a control that did not come easy and said: "I found it is easier to control the muscles in my arms and legs than to control the muscles in my tongue. I found it easier to control my eyes on the playing field than on the street. It is not easy to control what I will hear. Most of all, it is not easy to control my thoughts." He then expressed gratitude for the seminary program and paid tribute to his seminary teachers. They were the coaches who taught him control over the most permanent part of his nature.

It is not long before the ability to throw a ball or leap a barrier or lift a weight becomes incidental in life. Physical prowess fades. But moral and spiritual strength can grow stronger as the physical part of us weakens with age.

Rote learning in the gospel

If you want your children to grow spiritually, teach them the doctrines of the gospel.

If you want your son to play the piano, it is good to expose him to music. This may give him a feel for it and help greatly in his learning. But this is not enough. There is the practice and the memorization and the practice and the practice and the practice before he can play it well.

If you want your daughter to learn a language, expose her to those who speak it. She may get a feel for the language, even pick up many words. But this is not enough. She must memorize grammar and vocabulary. She must practice pronunciation. There is rote learning without which she will never speak or write the language fluently.

So it is with the gospel. One may have a feel for it. But some time one must *learn* the doctrine. Here, too, rote learning, practice, memorization, reading, listening, discussion, all become essential. There is no royal road to learning.

Church curriculum centered in scriptures and history of the Church

The Church can help parents because this kind of learning is effectively given in a classroom setting. So we have seminaries, institutes, religion classes; there are priesthood, Sunday School, and auxiliary classes. The curriculum for all of them centers in the scriptures and the history of the Church. Spiritual development is tied very closely to a knowledge of the scriptures, where the doctrines are found.

A school library may hold a world of knowledge. But unless a student knows the system of cataloging, a search for that knowledge will be discouraging; it will be an ordeal. Those systems are really not too difficult to learn. Then all of the knowledge in all of the books is opened to him. Searching becomes very simple indeed. But one must find it and read it. One must *earn* it.

It is so with the scriptures. They contain the fulness of the everlasting gospel, an eternity of knowledge. But one must learn to use them or the search will be discouraging. Again, there is a system. Learn about the concordance, the footnotes, the Topical Guide; memorize the books of the Bible and the Book of Mormon. And the scriptures will then yield their treasure. All of this is taught in the seminary and institute classes. The teachers are both worthy and well trained. But they cannot help if your students are not enrolled.

Seminary and institute classes are foundations

There is a revolution in progress. The silicone chip has changed our future. We move from the Industrial Age to the Age of Information. And schools are tooling up to meet the challenge. Graduation requirements for high schools and entrance requirements for colleges are being tightened up. Elective courses are being reduced in number, and they must be carefully selected.

Without guidance, your student may choose another elective instead of seminary, or another course instead of an institute class. That would surely be a mistake. It would be like adding one more brick to the house of knowledge when there is little mortar to hold it all together. Parents, encourage, even insist, that your students register for seminary or institute. Presidents, bishops, youth leaders, you are responsible to encourage every youngster, without exception, to enroll. Few things you do will benefit them quite as much.

Students, if your values are in place, you will not hesitate to forego an elective class that may decorate your life in favor of instruction which can hold together the very foundation of it. Then, once enrolled, attend, study, and learn. Persuade your friends to do the same. You will never regret it; this I promise you.

Support teachers

Parents, you are greatly indebted to teachers. Somehow you must show it by supporting them. Very few teachers are unworthy of support. If there is a problem, too frequently and all too quickly some parents side with their child against a teacher. As a rule of thumb, we have told our youngsters that disrespect for teachers, in public schools or in Church schools, brings trouble at home as well. This year two hundred thousand students are enrolled in seminary, and over one hundred and twenty thousand in institutes of religion in eighteen languages in sixty-

eight countries. Whether it be released-time, the early-morning, or the home-study programs, the courses are the same. They center in the scriptures; they teach the doctrine and history of the Church.

Some classes are very humble indeed. President Kimball and I once attended a seminary class in North Dakota. We did not meet in a fine room with a blackboard and projector and special school chairs. We met in the very small bedroom in a very small house.

The teacher, Sister Two Dogs, sat on the edge of the bed. The students crowded together on the floor. It was no less a class than one held in a beautiful building. The most important ingredient, the Spirit of the Lord, was there. I attended a seminary graduation in Omaha, Nebraska. The speaker, again a young man, described this experience.

"Each morning I awoke to the sweet voice of my mother calling out, 'John, John, time to get ready for seminary!' The year rolled on and the mornings grew cold and wet and dark; still the happy voice of Mother would sing out, 'John, John, time to get up for seminary!' " Then he added, "I learned to hate that sound!"

But then, choking back the tears, he thanked his mother for what she had given him. And I think only later did he realize that she had to be up first every morning.

How free? How safe?

The temptation your children will face will not come at home nor in the

seminary class. It will come later, when they are away from both teacher and parent. One day you must set them free. When that day comes, how *free* will they be, and how *safe*? It will depend on how much truth they have received. I know of a young missionary who, half a world away from his parents and teachers, faced the testing that comes to young manhood. There, beyond the control of either of them, he made a decision. Later he wrote: "I'm so glad I stayed, because during this last month I found something—I found myself."

I thank God for teachers in the Church, you who have chosen, and have been chosen for, the better part.

In those discouraging hours before immature, disinterested, and sometimes impudent students, may you hear a voice as well. That still, small voice of inspiration whispering, "Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you" (D&C 88:78).

The Lord was a teacher. I bear testimony of Him, and pray that He will bless all those who follow in His footsteps to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Benson

Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Theodore M. Burton, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Procedure for preparing Church teaching materials

For the past several years, I have served as Executive Director of the Church Curriculum Department. When I became fully aware of the immense effort required to prepare a

single course of study, I was overwhelmed. I now have much greater appreciation for the approved teaching materials of the Church.

Let me give you an example. The present *Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Supplement*, which was prepared to help teachers teach the New Testa-