

ing to stand squarely in defense of the great truth that our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was indeed the Son of God" (address delivered at LDS Student Association Fireside, Utah State University, 10 Oct. 1971).

Our knowledge of the literal divinity, resurrection, and atonement of Jesus Christ is more certain and more distinctive with each passing year. That is one reason the Lord inspired his prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, to have us reemphasize our study and testimony of the Book of Mormon, whose mission is "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God" (Book of Mormon title page).

Guard against careless omissions

We live in a time when too many who purport to be Christians have a cause that comes ahead of Christ. For example, a national magazine recently reported an innovation by a new bishop of a prominent Christian church. Their ministers have always consecrated the emblems of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ in the name of the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." However, in an effort to use what are called "nonsexist words," this new bishop has begun to consecrate the eucharist in the name of the "Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer" ("Fretful Murmur in the Cathedral," *Insight*, 24 Apr. 1989, p. 47). Such trendy and expedient tampering with the Christian faith is illustrative of the extent to which some are unwilling to witness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Such deliberate deviations are not likely to be made by faithful Latter-day

Saints. However, we need to be on guard against careless omissions and oversights in our personal testimonies, in our formal instruction, and in our worship and funeral services.

Be not ashamed

In addition, each of us has many opportunities to proclaim our belief to friends and neighbors, fellow workers, and casual acquaintances. I hope we will take these opportunities to express our love for our Savior, our witness of his divine mission, and our determination to serve him.

If we do all of this, we can say, like the Apostle Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

And, we can say, like the prophet Nephi, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

I testify of Jesus Christ, the Lord God of Israel, the light and life of the world, as I affirm the truth of his gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder James E. Faust

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.

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.

How often do you have family prayer?

A few years ago, Bishop Stanley Smoot was interviewed by President Spencer W. Kimball. President Kimball asked, "How often do you have family prayer?"

Bishop Smoot answered, "We try to have family prayer twice a day, but we average about once."

President Kimball answered, "In the past, having family prayer once a day may have been all right. But in the future it will not be enough if we are going to save our families."

I wonder if having casual and infrequent family home evening will be enough in the future to fortify our children with sufficient moral strength. In the future, infrequent family scripture study may be inadequate to arm our children with the virtue necessary to withstand the moral decay of the environment in which they will live. Where in the world will the children learn chastity, integrity, honesty, and basic human decency if not at home? These values will, of course, be reinforced at church, but parental teaching is more constant.

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.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to this Young Women's choir from the Bountiful Utah and Val Verda Utah regions for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon and for their own personal beauty and innocence before the Lord. The choir will now sing in closing "We Ever Pray for Thee."