

19. See Genesis 1:27; Moses 1:13; Mosiah 7:27; Ether 3:16–17.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:33.
21. See James E. Faust, Brigham Young University devotional address, 15 Nov. 1994.
22. Exodus 20:14; see also Doctrine and Covenants 42:24.
23. See 1 Corinthians 6:19.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17.
25. Exodus 20:15; see also Matthew 19:18; Doctrine and Covenants 42:20; Doctrine and Covenants 119; Malachi 3:8–11.
26. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 43.
27. See Matthew 5:42; Acts 20:35.
28. Exodus 20:16; Matthew 19:18.
29. See *Hymns*, no. 272; Doctrine and Covenants 93:24; John 8:32.
30. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
31. Exodus 20:17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:25.
32. See 2 Nephi 9:18–24.
33. See 2 Nephi 31:20.
34. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:19; John Taylor, *The Government of God*

(Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1852), pp. 32–46.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy. We sent Brother Mickelsen and Sister Mickelsen to South America for a three-year call. They stayed five years. I'm amazed that his English is as proficient as it is. He could have given the same sermon in Spanish equally as well.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing that favorite hymn of President Spencer W. Kimball, "I Need Thee Every Hour." Then Sister Anne G. Wirthlin, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Sister Anne G. Wirthlin

Scriptures pertaining to children

Brothers and sisters, just one year ago Sister Susan Warner and I were sustained as counselors to Sister Patricia Pinegar in a new Primary general presidency. Having reared twenty-four children between us, we might have had reason to feel quite confident in our ability to understand the needs of children. However, the responsibility of representing the children of the Church in today's world weighed heavily upon us. Our greatest desire was to know the will of our Father in Heaven and to seek His direction. In counseling with Elder Robert D. Hales at the time of our call, he suggested that as we read our scriptures, we mark the passages that pertain to children. We found there are many. In

fact it seems that the scriptures were written for families. The prophets have left no doubt as to the desires of the Lord regarding His little ones:

Nephi began his record, "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1).

Enos began his record, "Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it" (Enos 1:1).

Our Primary theme is from the words of Isaiah: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13).

How do we teach children?

Our Father in Heaven wants us to teach His children, to teach them who they really are, and to bring them to the Savior. In her general conference message last October, I remember Sister Pinegar's searching question: "Who will teach the children?" It was not only a question but an invitation for all of us, all of us who find children within the circle of our influence, to answer the call of our Father in Heaven to teach His children.

As we humbly try to answer that call, another more probing question comes to mind: How do we teach the children? How do we impress the word of the Lord upon their hearts while they are young so that as they grow into the years of their youth, they will have the ability to discern between truth and error and the inner strength to resist temptation? How can we so nourish them in their spiritual growth that their obedience moves from mere outward compliance to an inward desire born out of a love for their Father in Heaven and an understanding of who they are?

Teach children to love the Lord

These questions, while perplexing to us, are not unique to our day. They have challenged parents through all generations. And the counsel of the Lord, though given hundreds of years ago through Moses to the children of Israel, is as if He were speaking to us today. In Deuteronomy we read:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

"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, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. . . .

"And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:5-7, 9).

When first we love the Lord with all our hearts, then we can lead our children to Him in all of our interactions. They will grow in their devotion to the Lord as they see our devotion to Him. They will understand the power of prayer as they hear us pray to a loving Heavenly Father, who is there listening and answering our prayers. They will understand faith as they see us live by faith. And they will learn the power of love by the kind and respectful ways that we relate to them. We cannot teach truth to our children apart from the trusting, caring relationships that we have with them. Elder Howard W. Hunter said, "A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 65).

When our children feel our love for the Lord and our unconditional love for them, then our example becomes a meaningful guide to them as they develop their own spiritual strength. Remember the Lord's commandment to the Israelites to, first, put His words in their hearts, and then He said, "Teach them diligently unto thy children" (Deuteronomy 6:7). In all that we do we can teach our children to love the Lord. At times our most impressionable teaching happens when we don't even realize that we're teaching.

I remember as a teacher of the eleven-year-old girls in Primary, we held a luncheon for the girls and their mothers. I had asked each girl to introduce her mother and tell one thing that she admired about her. One of the girls said that she knew that her mother loved to read the scriptures. She held up her scriptures and said, "I can tell where she has been in the house by where I find her scriptures." I have remembered that example over the years and thought how

natural it would have been for that mother to transmit a love of the scriptures to her children, because she had developed that love herself. We teach first what we are—and those are the impressions that live in the minds and hearts of our children.

Home—an oasis in the world

There is a spirit that pervades in our homes when there is a love of the Lord, a love for one another, and a commitment to obedience that springs out of that love. As I speak of that spirit, I remember our mission home in Frankfurt, Germany, where my husband served as mission president. Our daughter, Marianne, was ten years old at the time. Some of her friends from school would come to the mission home and occasionally stay overnight. One night, one of her friends said, "I like to come to your house because I feel safe here." Marianne understood what she meant—all of our family knew the spirit of the mission home. It was a legacy that was left by thousands of dedicated missionaries who had passed through that home and shared their testimonies and their love for their Heavenly Father and the Savior. It is a spirit that can be felt in all of our homes when as families we share testimonies and feelings of the Spirit as we read the scriptures and when we kneel together in prayer.

President Kimball shared vivid memories of his home when the family knelt before meals to pray, their chairs turned back from the table, dinner plates upside down. He remembers night prayers at his mother's knee. He said, "I feel sorry for children who must learn these important lessons after they are grown, when it is so much harder" (in Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977], p. 31). Home can be an oasis in the world. It's a place where every child has a right to feel safe.

Children's testimonies nourished by love

In a fast and testimony meeting I attended recently in my own ward, three children bore their testimonies. Richie stood at the beginning of the meeting and said, "Last night I was reading from 1 Nephi, chapters 1, 2, and 3; and as I was reading I felt a great feeling of peace. I felt good inside. I'm thankful for the scriptures."

Charity told of an experience she had of attending a concert with her family and becoming separated from her parents. She said, "I found a corner and sat down and prayed to Heavenly Father. I asked Him to send the Holy Ghost to be with me until my parents could find me—and I wasn't afraid."

Spencer had just been ordained to be a deacon. He expressed his appreciation for the bishop who had ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood and told how much it meant to him to be a deacon. These children had been touched in their hearts by parents, teachers, and leaders who first loved the Lord and then turned the children to Him.

Touch the hearts of the children

Within our family circle we can help our children identify feelings of the Spirit and encourage them to express those feelings in their own words. We can invite them to share the things they are learning in Primary and other Church meetings. By so doing we open the door for the Spirit to confirm those teachings in their hearts.

Brothers and sisters, we can touch the hearts of our children and bring them to the Savior. They will see Him first through our eyes, and they will learn how to know and love Him as their most trusted friend. They will understand what it means to have His Spirit to be with them—and that will be their strength. It is my prayer, my brothers and sisters, that we may all keep that vision before

us, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Sister Anne G. Wirthlin, first counselor in the Pri-

mary general presidency. Elder Hans B. Ringger, who received emeritus status at the Saturday afternoon session, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Durrel A. Woolsey, who was released as a member of the Seventy yesterday afternoon.

Elder Hans B. Ringger

“Lord, to whom shall we go?”

Crowds pushed toward Christ along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, eager to hear His message as He began His mission to mankind. Many disciples followed Him during these days. However, some of them were offended by Christ’s teachings and turned away from Him. Upon their departure Christ asked His twelve disciples if they also wanted to leave Him. Simon Peter answered Christ’s question by asking, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” (John 6:68).

This question is as relevant and urgent today as it was 2,000 years ago. As Latter-day Saints we believe that Christ shows us the way and place to go and what we must do to find Him. It is up to each of us to recognize Christ’s way and to follow it.

Bring life into harmony with God

A few months ago I had the privilege to hear a powerful testimony from a man searching for the truth. Through the gospel his eyes were opened to the eternal and he was able to redirect his life. At the same time I learned that a faithful member of the Church had distanced himself from the gospel and had changed his beliefs. Both men had tried with good intentions to find out to whom they should go but arrived at opposite conclusions and, therefore, went on diverging paths. What can be the cause for such opposing actions?

I believe that words and actions are rooted in our thoughts and that our thoughts determine our deeds. Our daily decisions, planned or spontaneous, are the result of our thoughts, and we are responsible for them. Although we as individuals might think that we are and can act independently of God, we cannot escape the realization that we are subject to eternal laws. Our happiness and our peace in this life, as well as in the life after, depend on our readiness to base our thoughts and actions on God-given laws. True peace of mind and everlasting happiness come from being in harmony with God. If we are to be one with Deity, then it is we who must change—and not God.

I believe that the two men chose different paths because their way of thinking and their understanding of God are different. It is essential to know God so that we can gain eternal blessings and salvation through living in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Gaining a knowledge of Christ and God is a prerequisite for a true understanding of our mission in life. Lowell L. Bennion writes in his book *Legacies of Jesus*: “One of the most important things we need to learn is what are the attributes of God. Christ came to earth to reveal to us the character of God. He is the revelation of God to human beings, teaching us by precept and example the meaning of faith, humility, integrity, and love” (*Legacies of Jesus* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990], p. 61).