

# A Sin-Resistant Generation

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As you teach, lead, and love children, you can receive personal revelation that will aid you in creating and arming valiant, sin-resistant children.

A year and a half ago, President Russell M. Nelson spoke of the need “to teach and help raise a sin-resistant generation.”<sup>1</sup> That phrase—“a sin-resistant generation”—struck a deep spiritual chord within me.

We honor children who strive to live pure and obedient lives. I have witnessed the strength of many children throughout the world. They stand resilient, “steadfast and immovable”<sup>2</sup> in a variety of challenging circumstances and environments. These children understand their divine identity, feel Heavenly Father’s love for them, and seek to obey His will.

However, there are children who struggle to stand “steadfast and immovable” and whose delicate minds are being wounded.<sup>3</sup> They are being attacked on every side by “the fiery darts of the adversary”<sup>4</sup> and are in need of reinforcement and support. They are an overwhelming motivation for us to step up and wage a war against sin in our effort to bring our children unto Christ.

Listen to the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie nearly 43 years ago:

“As members of the Church, we are engaged in a mighty conflict. We are at war. We have enlisted in the cause of Christ to fight against Lucifer. ...

“The great war that rages on every side and which unfortunately is resulting in many casualties, some fatal, is no new thing. ...

“Now there neither are nor can be any neutrals in this war.”<sup>5</sup>

Today the war continues with increased intensity. The battle touches us all, and our children are on the front lines facing the opposing forces. Thus, the need intensifies for us to strengthen our spiritual strategies.

Fortifying children to become sin-resistant is a task and a blessing for parents, grandparents, family members, teachers, and leaders. We each bear responsibility to help. However, the Lord has specifically instructed *parents* to teach their children “to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of

baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost” and “to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

How to “bring up [our] children in light and truth”<sup>7</sup> may be a challenging question since it is individualized for each family and each child, but Heavenly Father has given universal guidelines that will help us. The Spirit will inspire us in the most effective ways we can spiritually inoculate our children.

To begin, having a vision of the importance of this responsibility is essential. We must understand our—and their—divine identity and purpose before we can help our children see *who* they are and *why* they are here. We must help them know without question that they are sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father and that He has divine expectations of them.

Second, understanding the doctrine of repentance is essential for becoming resistant to sin. Being sin-resistant doesn’t mean being sinless, but it does imply being continually repentant, vigilant, and valiant. Perhaps being sin-resistant comes as a blessing from repeatedly resisting sin. As James said, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”<sup>8</sup>

The stripling warriors “were exceedingly valiant for courage ... ; but behold, this was not all—they were ... true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted. Yea, ... they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him.”<sup>9</sup> These young men went to war carrying Christlike virtues as weapons against their adversaries. President Thomas S. Monson reminded us that “the call for courage comes constantly to each of us. Every day of our lives courage is needed—not just for the momentous events but more often as we make decisions or respond to circumstances around us.”<sup>10</sup>

Our children don spiritual armor as they establish patterns of personal daily discipleship. Perhaps we underestimate the abilities of children to grasp the concept of daily discipleship. President Henry B. Eyring counseled us to “start early and be steady.”<sup>11</sup> So a third key to helping children become sin-resistant is to begin at very early ages to lovingly infuse them with basic gospel doctrines and principles—from the scriptures, the Articles of Faith, the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, Primary songs, hymns, and our own personal testimonies—that will lead children to the Savior.

Creating consistent habits of prayer, scripture study, family home evening, and Sabbath worship leads to wholeness, internal consistency, and strong moral values—in other words, spiritual integrity. In today’s world where integrity has all but disappeared, our children deserve to understand what true integrity is and why it is so important—especially as we prepare them to make and keep sacred covenants at baptism and in the temple. As *Preach My Gospel* teaches, “Keeping commitments prepares people [including very young people] to make and keep sacred covenants.”<sup>12</sup>

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught, "When we talk about covenant keeping, we are talking about the heart and soul of our purpose in mortality."<sup>13</sup> There is unusual power in making and keeping covenants with our Heavenly Father. The adversary knows this, so he has obscured the concept of covenant making.<sup>14</sup> Helping children understand, make, and keep sacred covenants is another key in creating a sin-resistant generation.

How do we prepare our children to make and keep sacred covenants as they enter and progress along the covenant path? Teaching children to keep simple promises when they are young will empower them to keep holy covenants later in life.

Let me share a simple example: In family home evening, a father asked, "How are we getting along as a family?" Five-year-old Lizzie complained that her big brother, Kevin, was teasing her too much and hurting her feelings. Kevin reluctantly admitted that Lizzie was right. Kevin's mother asked him what he could do to get along better with his sister. Kevin thought and decided he would promise Lizzie that he would go one whole day without teasing her.

At the end of the next day as everyone gathered for family prayer, Kevin's dad asked Kevin how he had done. Kevin's response was "Dad, I kept my promise!" Lizzie happily agreed, and the family congratulated Kevin.

Kevin's mother then suggested that if he could keep his promise for one day, why couldn't he do it for two days? Kevin agreed to try it again. Two days passed, Kevin was successful in keeping his promise, and Lizzie was even more thankful! When his father asked why he was keeping his promises so well, Kevin said, "I kept my promise because I said I would."

A succession of small, successfully kept promises leads to integrity. The consistent practice of promise keeping is spiritual preparation for children to receive their first covenant of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, wherein they covenant to serve God and keep His commandments.<sup>15</sup> Promises and covenants are inseparable.

In the book of Daniel, we learn of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refusing to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's idol.<sup>16</sup> The king warned them that they would be cast into a burning fiery furnace if they didn't comply. They refused and said:

"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. ...

"But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods."<sup>17</sup>

"But if not." Consider the meaning of these three words and how they relate to keeping covenants. These three young men were not basing their obedience upon being delivered. Even if they were not delivered, they would keep their promise to the Lord because they said they would. Keeping our covenants is always independent of our situation. These three young men, just as the stripling warriors, are wonderful examples of sin-resistance for our children.

How do these examples apply in our homes and to our families? “Line upon line, precept upon precept,”<sup>18</sup> we help children taste success in small bites. As they keep their promises, they feel the Spirit in their lives. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught that “the consummate reward of integrity is the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>19</sup> Then shall our children’s “confidence wax strong in the presence of God.”<sup>20</sup> Out of the well of integrity springs an empowered, sin-resistant generation.

Brothers and sisters, hold your little ones close—so close that they see your daily religious behavior and watch you keeping your promises and covenants. “Children are great imitators, so give them something great to imitate.”<sup>21</sup> We are indeed helping to teach and raise a sin-resistant generation unto the Lord promise by promise and covenant by covenant.

I testify that Jesus Christ leads this Church. As you teach, lead, and love children in the Savior’s way, you can receive personal revelation that will aid you in creating and arming valiant, sin-resistant children. My prayer is that our children will echo the words of Nephi: “Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?”<sup>22</sup> I testify that our Savior atoned for the sins of the world<sup>23</sup>—because He said He would—and that He loves us more than we mere mortals can even comprehend<sup>24</sup>—because He said He would. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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