



“Unfortunately, a few of our otherwise good youth are unstretched, having almost a free pass. Perks are provided, including cars complete with fuel and insurance—all paid for by parents who sometimes listen in vain for a few courteous and appreciative words” (Neal A. Maxwell, *Ensign*, May 1975, 101.)

Grass Licking and Wimp Free Parenting

Brigham Young University-Idaho
Campus Education Week, July 2007



We Need Each Other

“Mom, don’t you know? Sometimes you just need someone with skin on.”



Families consist of people with skin on—ideally, men and women, boys and girls, who care about us, love us, reach out to us, and sustain us. It doesn’t matter if things haven’t gone all that well on a particular day, or if we’ve scored a resounding success, there is nothing quite like being able to come home at night into the embrace of loving, supportive family members and have them say, ‘You’re going to be okay,’ or ‘Way to Go! We’re so proud of you!’ (Sheri Dew, *If Life We’re Easy, It Wouldn’t Be Hard*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005], 78).



Parental Peer Pressure

In First Nephi chapter eight, we learn in Lehi’s dream about a great and spacious building. In describing that building, we learn that it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit (1 Nephi 8:27).

Furthermore, in verse 28, we learn that those in the great and spacious building were “scoffing” at those who were partaking of the fruit, or, as we might say, those who were trying their best to “live the gospel.”



Parental Peer Pressure

To “scoff” means to *mock* or *ridicule*. To mock who? To mock those who live the gospel. Footnote 28c calls our attention to the notion of “peer influence.” Indeed, there was a lot of peer pressure from those who resided in the great and spacious building. In fact, that influence was so strong that those who were on the path and pressing forward, once mocked or ridiculed, the “fell away into the forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:28).



What Pressure Do You Feel as a Parent?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____



Seeds Parents Sow

- Doctrine & Covenants 6:33, where it reads, “Fear not to do good, my [parents], for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward.”



We Reap What We Sow

Recently, I was made aware of a young man who came home from his mission after just a few weeks in the Missionary Training Center. The parents did not understand how something like this could happen; after all, they were good parents and loved their children. Nevertheless, a caring priesthood leader put his arms around them and said, "What do you expect? For years your children have always watched you either not come to church, or leave church services after sacrament meeting; they have watched you not fulfill your callings or duties in the Church; and not pay tithing. It only makes sense that your son would come home after several weeks. He was just doing what he has seen you do all of his life." Ouch! However, the priesthood leader understood an important concept. We reap what we sow, especially in parenting.

A Parable to Consider

"As two men walked across an eastern university campus, they were attracted by a crowd of people surrounding a large maple tree. They approached and noticed that the crowd was being amused by the antics of a fox-tailed squirrel circling the tree, climbing it, and running back down again. An Irish setter crouched nearby, intently watching the squirrel. Each time the squirrel ran up the tree out of sight, the dog would slowly creep toward the tree. The squirrel paid little attention as the dog crept closer and closer, patiently biding its time.

"People watching this entertaining drama unfold knew what could happen, but they did nothing until in a flash the dog, catching the squirrel unawares, had it in the grip of his sharp teeth.



The Bushy-Tailed Squirrel



"The people then rushed forward in horror, forcing the dog's mouth open to rescue the squirrel. It was too late. The squirrel was dead. Anyone could have warned the squirrel or held back the dog. But they had been momentarily amused and watched silently while evil slowly crept up on good. When they rushed to the defense, it was too late.

"We see around us daily that which is portrayed in this parable. We sit idly by, watching as an insidious stream of profanity, vulgarity, demeaning behavior; a mocking of righteous ideals and principles invades our homes and lives through most types of media, teaching our children negative values and moral corruption. We then become upset when our children perform differently than we would wish, and social behavior continues to deteriorate" (David B. Haight, *A Light unto the World*, p. 134).

You May Reap What You Sow

Doesn't this story reflect the attitude that many parents have today? They think it is *cute* when they dress their little three-year-old daughter in a bikini, or listen to their five-year-old son talk back to them. What appears to be cute and harmless can eventually develop into full-blown rebellion and disobedience.



Seeds Parents Sow: Media Messes & Clothing

- We are amazed at the number of parents who give their children free access to televisions in their bedrooms, complete with VCR's and cable or satellite connections.
- Mothers who buy their daughters Bikini's and immodest clothing
- Father's who drop their son's and his friends at R-rated movies

Seeds Parents Sow: Sports Debacles

Several years ago in a priesthood meeting, a wise father shared the following experience:

"Do not ever put sports before the gospel. We did that, and now we have a 19 year old son who has no interest in going on a mission" This family spent years, traveling the countryside so their son could play in baseball tournaments on Sundays, and every other day of the week for that matter.

This heartbroken father then related how his son consistently missed his Sunday meetings, Wednesday night activities, and just about everything else the Church offered. These parents thought they were getting a future pro prospect; instead, they had a young man who floundered spiritually.

So I ask, parents, what seeds are you sowing? What have you planted? What will you harvest?



Seeds Parents Sow: Dating Disasters

- Parents who push their pre-teen children to have boyfriends/girlfriends
- Parents who allow their children to date before 16, or steady date
- Parents who allow their young men preparing for missions to have girlfriends
- Parents who do not follow prophetic standards and allow their children to have a free for all when it comes to dating

So what do we teach our kids?

The diagram illustrates a process of spiritual surrender. On the left, a blue circle labeled 'Self Esteem' has a downward arrow pointing to another blue circle labeled '"Self Reliance"'. On the right, a blue circle labeled 'Divine Reliance' has a downward arrow pointing to another blue circle labeled 'Complete Dependence On God'. To the right of these arrows, the text 'The "Surrendered Life"' is written in yellow.

How Do We Teach Divine Reliance?

Six Parental Styles

A red triangle is centered on the page. The word 'Anxiety' is written in red above the top vertex. The word 'Control' is written in blue below the bottom-left vertex. The word 'Nurturing' is written in blue below the bottom-right vertex.

Anxiety ↑ **Control** ↑ **Nurturing** ↑

Overprotective Parenting
Overly Bonded Children
May have independence problems

Gospel Implications
Children may be more converted to the family or the church than the gospel...

Anxiety ↓ **Control** ↑ **Nurturing** ↓

Controlling Parenting
Emphasis on Rules
Children very obedient or rebel at first opportunity
Gospel Implications:
Children believe in a rigid God of rules

Anxiety ↓ **Control** ↓ **Nurturing** ↑

Democratic Parenting
High Warmth, Few Rules
Self Directed Children
Gospel Implication:
Children Learn a Loving God
May struggle with "exactness" in their obedience.

Anxiety ↓ **Control** ↑ **Nurturing** ↑

Doctrine and Covenants 121:
 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; (High Nurturing)
 By kindness, and pure knowledge, (Low Anxiety)
 Reproving betimes with sharpness, (High Control) when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

Anxiety ↑ **Control** ↓ **Nurturing** ↓

Anxious
 Home is chaotic and unpredictable
 Children may look elsewhere for support
 Child Reveals Less
 High Anxiety Parent
 Overreacts To Child's Behavior
 Difficult to understand gospel principles in home with little love or rules
 Parent Talks More Listens Less
 Application:

How about this letter?

Dear Dad:

It is with great regret and sorrow that I'm writing you. I had to elope with my new girlfriend because I wanted to avoid a scene with mom and you. I have been finding real passion with Stacy and she is so nice. But I knew you would not approve of her because of all her piercing, tattoos, tight motorcycle clothes and the fact that she is much older than I am. But it's not only the passion...Dad she's pregnant. Stacy said that we will be very happy. She owns a trailer in the woods and has a stack of firewood for the whole winter.

We share a dream of having many more children. Stacy has opened my eyes to the fact that marijuana doesn't really hurt anyone. We'll be growing it for ourselves and trading it with the other people that live nearby for cocaine and ecstasy. In the meantime we will pray that science will find a cure for AIDS so Stacy can get better. She deserves it. Don't worry Dad. I'm 15 and I know how to take care of myself.

Someday I'm sure that we will be back to visit so that you can get to know your grandchildren.
 Love,
 Your Son John

PS. Dad, none of the above is true. I'm over at Tommy's house. I just wanted to remind you that there are worse things in life than the report card that's in my center desk drawer.

I love you.
 Call me when it's safe to come home.

Anxiety ↑ **Control** ↓ **Nurturing** ↑

Overindulgent
 Parents have difficulty being parents
 Do not understand that "love" and "fixing" are not the same thing...
 Gospel Implication:
 Kids stay active as long as the church meets their wants

Planting a Bountiful Crop

"My parents loved each other dearly. We had great respect for our mother and father. When I think of my mother and father, I think of them as workers in the temple. We spent a lot of time together. Every Saturday my father worked with us in the yard. Our parents went to Church with us. We prayed together, we studied the scriptures. In the morning, when we got up, we would go and sit against their bed in our pajamas and listen to them read scriptures. We just went in and joined them. There was no pressure to do that; we just did it" (Robert D. Hales, Church News, 16 April 1994, 12).

Reaping What We Sow

Elder Hales also explained that "One of the conditions of getting my drivers license was that I would drive Mother, who was Relief Society president, to distribute welfare to the poor and the needy." What great training this must have been for the future presiding Bishop of the Church. What impact did the seeds of working together, going to Church, and reading scriptures have on the harvest of Elder Hales future life? I'm sure that we would all agree— in the Hales family, the seeds of the gospel were firmly planted. And what did Elder Hales reap individually from the efforts of his parents? The answer: Much, very much.



A Lesson from Spokane

Several years ago, a Stake President from the Pacific Northwest related to us that he has home taught the same family for over 20 years. He mentioned that the family he had home taught is not active in the Church. When the children were approaching the age of baptism, the father would not allow any of the children to be baptized. It was his feeling that the age of eight was too young for one to decide such a critical decision. Therefore, the father made them wait until they could decide on their own. The stake president related that none of those children are active in the Church today. Not to mention the fact that in the name of agency, it sounds like the father took away the agency of his own children.



Take Back Your Home, Key #1: Don't Be Afraid to be Parents

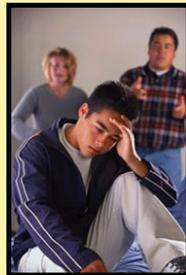


Too many parents are competing for the title of "The Fun-Cool-Parents of the Stake." Many parents have traded their values and beliefs for popularity. But, parenting is not a popularity contest; it is hard work. No one said that parents need to be OGRE'S. Families can have loads of fun and still live the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, parents have to stand up for their beliefs and convictions, draw a few lines in the sand, and enforce some rules. Parents can't be afraid to be parents.



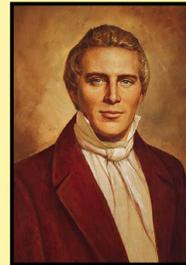
Parenting is Not a Popularity Contest!

"Do not be afraid to set clear moral standards and guidelines. Be sure to say no when it is needed. Even though your children say, "Well, everyone else is going to stay out until one or two in the morning, and their parents don't care. Why can't I? Don't you trust me?" Let [your children] know that there are some things that, as members of your family, you simply do not do. Some parents seem to be almost pathologically concerned about their children's popularity and social acceptance and go along with many things that are really against their better judgment, such as expensive fads, immodest clothes, late hours, dating before age sixteen, R-rated movies, and so on. For children and parents, standing up for what is right may be lonely at times. There may be evenings alone, parties missed, and movies which go unseen. It may not always be fun. But parenting is not a popularity contest" (Joe J. Christensen, *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 11; emphasis added).



Modern Revelation

- Doctrine & Covenants 68:25-32
- Doctrine & Covenants 93:41-53



A Lesson from the Cows



"I noticed while taking care of the cattle as a boy that more often than not the cows did not go through the holes they had created in the fence, but the calves did. Sometime we would ride up the fence line and find a calf separated from its mother. Often it would be half starved and bawling to get back inside the fence next to the mother. The calves seemed to know how to escape through the holes the older cattle had made, but rarely did they know how to step back through those holes. If they were not found, sometimes they died.



A Lesson from the Cows

"This is the true tragedy of grass licking obedience to the standards and counsels of the Church. Parents must be careful in their own pushing of the limits not to create holes that their children will slip through. Compromising, for example, on the types of movies we watch may create a hole that our children will crawl through to their own destruction. One generation's exception becomes the next generation's rule, as standards of behavior deteriorate. If the cows had stayed in the center of the meadow, no calf would have ever been lost" (S. Michael Wilcox, *Don't Leap with the Sheep, and other scriptural strategies for avoiding Satan's Snares* [Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, 2001], pp. 131-134).

The Consequence of Slackness



“All are free to choose, of course, and we would not have it otherwise. Unfortunately, however, when some choose slackness, they are choosing not only for themselves, but for the next generation and the next. **Small equivocations in parents can produce large deviations in their children!** Earlier generations in a family may have reflected dedication, while some in the current evidence equivocation. Sadly, in the next, some may choose dissension as erosion takes its toll” (Neal A. Maxwell, *CR*, October 1992, 89; emphasis added)”

Children Will Exceed their Parents Deviations

“Sometimes some parents mistakenly feel that they can relax a little as to conduct and conformity or take perhaps a so called liberal view of basic and fundamental things– thinking that a little laxness or indulgence won’t matter– or they may fail to teach or to attend Church, or may voice critical views. Some parents... seem to feel that they can ease up a little on the fundamentals without affecting their family or their families future. **But, he observed, ‘if a parent goes a little off course, the children are likely to exceed the parents example’**” (Richard L. Evans, *CR*, October 1964, pp. 135-136).

Take Back Your Home, Key #2: Stripping Ourselves of Hypocrisy

Subsequently, teachings from parents become less palatable to children, and certainly less powerful, when children see their own parents lie, speak bad about Church leaders, break the Sabbath, and swear. Living the gospel is critical. Why? Well, **teenagers can smell a hypocrite a mile away.** If parents are not living the gospel, if it is a “do as I say and not as I do” program in the home, teens will begin to question the teachings of the gospel. They may begin to think, **“If this gospel is so great, how come it hasn’t done a thing for my parents?”** They’re both jerks. They yell and scream, talk bad about others, and watch R-rated movies.” We cannot emphasize enough how critical parental example is.

Take Back Your Home, Key #3: Live the Gospel

President Thomas S. Monson taught the principle of parental example in General Conference several years ago:

“Yet another father taught a son a never-to-be-forgotten lesson in obedience and, by example, to honor the Sabbath day. I learned of this at the funeral service of a noble General Authority, H. Verlan Andersen. A tribute was paid to him by one of his sons. It has application wherever we are and whatever we are doing. It is the example of personal experience.

Sermons We See

“The son of Elder Andersen related that years earlier he had a special school date on a Saturday night. He borrowed from his father the family car. As he obtained the car keys and was heading for the door, his father said: “The car will need more gasoline before tomorrow. Be sure to fill the tank before coming home.”

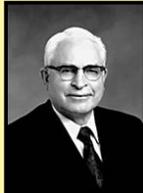
“Elder Andersen’s son related that the evening activity was wonderful. Friends met, refreshments were served, and all had a good time. In his exuberance, however, he failed to follow his father’s instruction to add fuel to the car’s tank before returning home.

“Sunday morning dawned. Elder Andersen discovered the gas gauge showed empty. The son saw his father walk back into the house and put the car keys on the table. In the Andersen home, the Sabbath day was a day for worship and thanksgiving, and not for purchases.

Sermons We See (Cont.)

As the funeral message continued, Elder Andersen’s son declared, “I saw my father put on his coat, bid us good-bye, and then walk the long distance to the chapel, that he might attend an early meeting.” Duty called. Truth was not held slave to expedience.

In concluding his funeral message, he said: “No son was ever taught more effectively by his father than I was on that occasion. My father not only knew the truth—he lived it.” (Thomas S. Monson, “Becoming Our Best Selves,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 18-19).





Take Back Your Home, Key #4: Fortify Your Children

• Ephesians 6:11-18

“The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation...

“The plan designed by the Father contemplates that man and woman, husband and wife, working together, fit each child individually with a shield of faith made to buckle on so firmly that it can neither be pulled off nor penetrated by those fiery darts.



The Shield of Faith

“It takes the steady strength of a father to hammer out the metal of it and the tender hands of a mother to polish and fit it on. Sometimes one parent is left to do it alone. It is difficult, but it can be done.

“In the Church we can teach about the materials from which a shield of faith is made: **reverence, courage, chastity, repentance, forgiveness, compassion.** In church we can learn how to assemble and fit them together. But the actual making of and fitting on of the shield of faith belongs in the family circle. Otherwise it may loosen and come off in a crisis...

“This shield of faith is not manufactured on an assembly line, only handmade in a cottage industry. Therefore our leaders press members to understand that what is most worth doing must be done at home. Some still do not see that too many out-of-home activities, however well intended, leave too little time to make and fit on the shield of faith at home.

“The great plan of happiness (see **Alma 42:8, 16**) revealed to prophets is the plan for a happy family. It is the love story between husband and wife, parents and children, that renews itself through the ages” (President Boyd K. Packer, *CR*, April 1995, 8-9).



Values Come from Parents

“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. “And they rehearsed ... the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (James E. Faust, “The Greatest Challenge in the World—Good Parenting,” *Ensign*, November 1990, 34).



The Shield of Faith

“I was reared in a home in which parents loved and appreciated the gospel of Jesus Christ. They understood the admonition of Paul to the Ephesian saints when he wrote, ‘Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’ (Ephesians 6:10-11, 14-16.)



The Shield of Faith

“We were dressed in our home each morning not only with hats and raincoats and boots to protect us from physical storm, but even more carefully in the armor of God. As we would kneel in family prayer and listen to our father, a bearer of the priesthood, pour out his soul to the Lord for the protection of his family against the fiery darts of the wicked, one more layer was added to our shield of faith. While our shield was being made strong, theirs was always available, for they were available, and we knew it. “What a protection it is to travel through the journey of life knowing that a shield of faith is being carefully constructed for us by loving parents from our first moments on earth.



The Shield of Faith

“Let me just give you a small example of how that shield would work. One day I was made an attractive offer by a group of marines, buddies of mine, as we were about to go on liberty. It wasn’t until after we were on our way that I discovered this was not the best of company to be in. It was then that I found out the reason they had invited me. It was because they knew of my standards. They knew that I would be sober when it was time to return to the base, and I could guide them back.



The Shield of Faith

“We found ourselves in Los Angeles on a streetcar headed toward a dance hall. They had already started to drink a little, and I was ready to part company with them. Then that protective shield took over, and I knew of the prayers of my parents for my welfare. The streetcar stopped and allowed new passengers to come aboard. The new passengers separated me from my buddies and pushed me to the back of the car. There I discovered a nice group of young people standing and seated. Immediately upon finding me in their company, one spoke up and said, ‘Hi, Marine! We’re Mormons. What do you know about our church?’



The Shield of Faith

“I answered, ‘Plenty,’ and got off the streetcar with them and went to a ward social. “The shield of faith was there. It was protecting me from the fiery darts of the wicked in order that in a proper time in my life I would be worthy to take an angel into the temple of the Lord, and there at its altar we would be sealed together for time and all eternity. “I know by personal experience the value of having noble parents to build around their children a protective shield of faith in our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ. I give you my witness that it works. May every child of God be given that opportunity in their lives—to start each day having their fathers blessing their home and giving them that protective shield of faith as they depart from the home to go about their every activity” L. Tom Perry, *Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], 61).



Finally, From President Hinckley

“All of us have problems. We face them everyday. How grateful I am that we have difficult things to wrestle with. They keep us young, if that is possible. They keep us alive. They keep us going. They keep us humble. They pull us down to our knees to ask the God of heaven for help in solving them. Be grateful for your problems, and know that somehow there will come a solution. Just do the best you can, but be sure it is the very best. Then leave it in the hands of the Lord” (President Gordon B. Hinckley, “An Evening with a General Authority,” CES Fireside, 7 February 2003).