



Family Times

Rearing Children in a Polluted Environment

The following are excerpts from Elder J. J. Christensen's "Raising Children in a polluted environment. Even though the talk was delivered over 10 years ago, I feel that his message is just as relevant today.

In a recent conference, Elder Boyd K. Packer said, "As we test the *moral* environment, we find the *pollution* index is spiraling upward" (*Ensign*, May 1992, p. 66). The Apostle Paul foresaw "that in the last days perilous times shall come" (**2 Tim. 3:1**). And speaking of the last days, the prophet Moroni declared, "Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth" (**Morm. 8:31**).

Sadly, the effects of this great pollution are perhaps most evident in the mass media, films, television, and popular music. Of this, Senator Robert D. Byrd said, "If we in this nation continue to sow the images of murder, violence, drug abuse, ... perversion, [and] pornography ... before the eyes of millions of children, year after year and day after day, we should not be surprised if the foundations of our society rot away as if from leprosy" (Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1992, p.

194).

Although there are some uplifting exceptions, in most areas of the mass media there seems to be a declaration of war against almost everything the majority treasures most: the family, religion, and patriotism. Marriage is degraded, while premarital and extramarital relations are encouraged and glamorized. Profanity and the foulest of vulgar gutter language bombard the ears of all who listen. Reportedly, in one R-rated movie, the most common, vulgar four-letter word was spoken 256 times! Human life itself is trivialized by the constant barrage of violence and killings. Remember that anything that is not good for children is rarely good for adults.

In an unsuccessful effort to ward off teen pregnancy and social disease, birth control devices are freely distributed. I am convinced that this practice strongly communicates the basic message to many youth that "anything goes; just protect yourself in the process."

It is no wonder that young parents become very anxious as they attempt to fulfill their sacred trust in the face of such an onslaught of despicable influences. Unfortunately, these challenges confront members

of the Church as well as non-members.

Parents who really want to receive assistance must return to the basics—the fundamentals of the gospel. Among all that could be said, here are four specific suggestions that, if applied, can make a positive difference:

First, do not be afraid to set clear moral standards and guidelines. Be sure to say no when it is needed. As Dr. John Rosemond counseled:

"[Give] your children regular, daily doses of Vitamin N. This vital nutrient consists simply of the most character-building two-letter word in the English language [*No*]. ... Unfortunately, many, if not most, of today's children suffer from Vitamin N deficiency. They've been overindulged by well-meaning parents who've given them far too much of what they want and far too little of what they truly need" (John K. Rosemond, *John Rosemond's Six-Point Plan for Raising Happy, Healthy Children*, Kansas City, Mo.: Andrews & McMeel, 1989, p. 114).

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

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Quotable:

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them 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.

You may need to get together with the parents of your children's friends and mutually agree on more acceptable high standards of entertainment, hours, and activities. Your children may be frustrated at first, but in the end they will grow to appreciate you even more because you cared enough about them to set some wholesome guidelines and standards.

Second, teach your children to work and to take responsibility. Especially in urban settings, too many children are growing up in an environment where they do not have enough to do. They are like the young thirteen-year-old boy who was asked what he did all day in the summer.

He said, "Well, I get up in the morning about ten or eleven. Then my mom gets me something to eat. Then maybe, I'll go with some of the guys and play a little basketball, maybe watch TV, and then go down to the mall and 'hang out' for a while—sorta watch the girls and stuff."

When asked what time he got

to bed, he said, "Oh, usually about one or two o'clock. I go over to a friend's house and watch some videos. It's really neat, because my friend's mom told the guy at the video shop that it was all right for her son to check out any video he wanted—including R-rated."

I feel great concern for the future of that young Latter-day Saint boy as well as for that of his friends.

I like what President Spencer W. Kimball has said on this topic:

"The idle generation! Hours each day and nothing to do. ...

"We want you parents to create work for your children. ...

"What can we do?" they ask.

"Do the shopping, work in the hospital, help the neighbors and the church custodian, wash dishes, vacuum the floors, make the beds, get the meals, learn to sew.

"Read good books, ... clean the house, press your clothes, rake the leaves, shovel the snow, peddle papers."

Then he concludes:

"Lawmakers in their overeagerness to protect the child have legislated until the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. But no law prohibits most work [here] suggested ... , and parents can make work" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982, pp. 360–61).

In addition, help your children learn self-discipline by such activities as learning to play a musical instrument or other demanding skill. I am reminded of the story of the salesman who came to a house one hot summer day. Through

the screen door he could see a young boy practicing his scales on the piano. His baseball glove and hat were by the side of the piano bench. He said, "Say, boy, is your mother home?" To which the boy replied, "What do you think?" Thank heavens for conscientious parents!

Every child should be helped to develop some skill or talent by which he or she can experience success and thus build self-esteem.

Missionaries who have learned to work hard and have developed self-discipline are much more successful.

Third, create an environment in your family in which spiritual experiences can occur. For example:

- Remember family prayer every day. With schedules as they are, you may need to have more than one prayer. Sending children out of your home without the spiritual protection of prayer is like sending them out into a blizzard without sufficient clothing.

- Hold family home evenings every week without fail. This is a wonderful time to share your testimony with your children. Give them an opportunity to share their feelings about the gospel. Help them to learn to recognize when they feel the presence of the Spirit. Family home evenings will help create an island of refuge and security within your own home.

- Read the scriptures together daily as a family. There is real power in the scriptures.

President Benson has said, "May I admonish you to participate in a program of daily reading and pondering of the scriptures. ... The Book of Mormon will change your life. It will fortify you against the

evils of our day. It will bring a spirituality into your life that no other book will" (*Ensign*, May 1986, p. 43).

Is the Book of Mormon a significant part of your reading? Count the number of rich promises President Marion G. Romney made to parents when he said:

"I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes. ... The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. ... The pure love of Christ ... will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness" (*Ensign*, May 1980, p. 67).

We should not take these ten promises lightly.

Fourth, follow the counsel of the prophets. Listen to their messages at this conference and re-read their counsel to us from prior occasions. If your personal and family practices do not conform to the counsel received, then, for your own family's sake, make some changes.

President Harold B. Lee said: "We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet ... [and quoting from the Doctrine and Covenants] 'as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith'

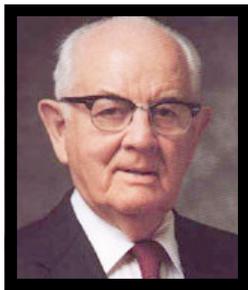
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President Spencer W.
Kimball

([D&C 21:4-5](#).)” He continued: “There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. ... Your safety and ours depends upon whether or not we follow the ones whom the Lord has placed to preside over his church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, pp. 152-53).

From a personal standpoint, of what value is it to have living prophets if we do not heed their counsel?

Fathers and mothers, it is not too late to change. There is still hope. You can begin today to apply these suggestions and others you may add. We can help our children and grandchildren to survive spiritually and morally in a world where the pollution index continues to spiral upward. The intent is not to take our children out of the world but, as the Lord prayed, to keep them from evil (see [John 17:15](#)).

I know that our Heavenly Father lives. We are his spirit children, and he loves his family.

Jesus is the Christ, and this is his church, which is led by living prophets.

Of this I sincerely testify in the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.

These four principles the Elder Christensen teaches are the very ones we have adopted as parents. I can testify that these principles will fortify us as parents as we strive to raise children who will make a contribution in society, will help build the kingdom of God on this earth, and raise successful families of their own.

