



Bringing Up Children in Light and Truth

The Lord has given parents the responsibility to teach their children the gospel by word and example.

From the Life of George Albert Smith

Near the end of his life, President George Albert Smith reflected on his upbringing and the teachings of his parents:

“I was born in a humble home. . . . My parents were living in very humble circumstances, but I praise my Maker and thank him with all my heart for sending me into their home.

“I grew up in Salt Lake City. When eight years of age, I was baptized in City Creek. I was confirmed a member of the Church in fast meeting in the Seventeenth Ward, and I learned when I was a boy that this is the work of the Lord. I learned that there were prophets living upon the earth. I learned that the inspiration of the Almighty would influence those who lived to enjoy it. . . .

“I don’t know of any man in all the world who has more reason to be grateful than I. I am thankful for my birthright, thankful for parents who taught me the gospel of Jesus Christ and set the example in their home. If I have done anything that I should not have done in my life, it would be something that I could not have learned in my mother’s home. With a large family of children, it took a mother with a good deal of patience, but she was always patient with us. There were sweetness and kindness and love there always.”¹

In his own home, George Albert Smith tried to follow his parents’ example of teaching with patience and love. His daughter Edith recalled an experience from her youth:

“He continually counseled us about our behavior, emphasizing honesty and fairness. I remember one day when on my way home



*George Albert Smith's wife, Lucy, and their daughters,
Edith (left) and Emily (right).*

from my piano lesson, the streetcar conductor overlooked collecting my fare. . . . Somehow he passed me by, and I reached my destination still holding my nickel in my hand, and frankly quite elated that I had made the trip free.

“. . . I ran gleefully to Father to tell him about my good fortune. He listened to my story patiently. I was beginning to think I was a great success. . . . I was sure that the conductor did not know I had not paid for the ride, and therefore all was well.

“When I had finished my tale, Father said, ‘But, darling, even if the conductor doesn’t know about this, you know and I know and Heavenly Father knows. So, there are still three of us who must be satisfied in seeing that you pay in full for value received.’”

Edith went back to the street corner and paid her fare when the streetcar returned. She later expressed gratitude for the way her father handled the situation: “I am indeed thankful for a Father who was wise enough to kindly point out the error to me, because if it had been overlooked, I could have thought he approved, and I might have tried something similar another time.”² [See suggestion 1 on page 244.]

Teachings of George Albert Smith

Parents have the primary responsibility to teach their children the gospel.

One of the greatest and richest of all your blessings will be that which comes if you teach as you should, and train as you should these choice spirits that our Heavenly Father is sending to the world in this latter day. . . . Do not leave the training of your children to the public schools. Do not leave their training to the Primary, to the Sunday School, to the [Church’s youth organizations]. They will help you and make a fine contribution but remember what God himself has said, that parents who do not teach their children faith in God, repentance and baptism and the laying on of hands when eight years of age, the sin be upon the heads of the parents [see D&C 68:25–28]. This is not a threat, my brethren and sisters, that is the kind and loving advice of our Heavenly Father who knows all

things and understands and realizes what it means when children are allowed to grow up without this training.³

What I am about to say I am exceedingly anxious that it should sink into the mind of every parent in Zion, and that is, that while the Lord has provided all these wonderful educational institutions, while science has contributed so much for our comfort and our blessing, while the Church has prepared places to which we may send our children to be taught the gospel of Christ, that does not relieve you or me of the responsibility and the obligation that is laid upon us by our Heavenly Father to teach our own children. . . . It is not sufficient that my children are taught faith, repentance and baptism, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost in the auxiliary organizations. My Father in heaven has commanded that I should do that myself.⁴

Nobody else can perform the part that God has assigned to us as parents. We have assumed an obligation when we have been the means of bringing children into the world. We can't place that responsibility upon any organization. It is ours. . . . First and foremost the obligation is upon you and upon me to not only advise and counsel but to train, by setting an example, by spending sufficient time with our loved ones, these boys and girls, that they may not be led into . . . forbidden paths.⁵

Call your families about you, and if you have failed in the past to give them an understanding of the purposes of life and a knowledge of the Gospel of our Lord, do it now, for I say to you as a servant of the Lord, they need it now and they will need it from now on.⁶ [See suggestion 2 on page 244.]

**Other interests must not cause us to lose sight
of our duty to teach our children.**

We are told in Luke that there would be a time when men would be choked with the cares and the riches and the pleasures of life [see Luke 8:14]. I have in my mind . . . even now, men and women that I love, whose very spirituality is being choked by these very things, and the adversary is leading them along that easy pathway of pleasure and they are neglecting their duty as parents and as members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

. . . Now in the midst of confusion, excitement and all the pleasures of life, . . . let us not lose sight of the duty that we owe these boys and girls who are created in the image of God. He is the Father of their spirits, and he will hold us responsible for the teaching that they receive. I hope and pray that we will so teach them that when the end shall come we can receive from him that blessing, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord," and that we may have our loved ones with us eternally.⁷

I think I would like to tell you a story. A number of years ago, there lived in Indiana two boys, young fellows who worked on farms—farms five to seven miles apart. They worked hard each day doing their chores, milking cows, etc. The first boy went to his father one day when he was about 13 or 14 years of age and said, "Father, I would like to go into the city. I would like to see the bright lights. I wonder if I could not go in some evening early, if I worked hard and got my work done?" The father said, "You can not do that because you can not do your work." "If I am willing to get up at daylight and work all day, can I walk into the city? It is not very far, and I could be there for an hour or two and then come home early." The father said, "Well, of course if you will do all your chores, then you can go." Fathers, get this. The result was, he went in. He got in town when it was nearly dark. Stores and banks were closed. There were plenty of pool halls and gambling places open. All good people were indoors, most of them in their own homes. All the riff-raff was on the streets or in these places. They saw this young boy come in and they picked him up. It was not long until they had shown him some of the things no boy should see. That was his experience. It gave him a taste of something that was not good for him.

The second boy went to his father in the same way. He said, "Father, I would like to go into town sometime. Would you not like me to go and see some of the things I have never seen? I will have to go before dark to see anything." "My boy," replied the father, "I think you are entitled to go into town, and I think you are entitled to have your father go with you. You pick the day and I will help with the chores so we can go early enough that you can meet some of my associates."

It is the same state I'm talking about—the two farms were not far apart. Within a week he had chosen the day. They did the chores, and went into town. They arrived a little before four o'clock. They got there before the banks were closed. The boy was dressed in his good clothes. His father took him into the bank and introduced him to the banker, who took him by the hand and said, "When you are in town, come and see us and we will make you welcome."

His father took him to business houses where he had business, where people greeted him pleasantly. When they went home together, after they had remained to see a show, that boy had the acquaintance of some of the finest men in the community. The result was that when he grew older and went into town, his companionship was with fine people.⁸ [See suggestion 3 on page 244.]

I want to suggest to you . . . , there is no time that you can spend, no way in which you can utilize your time that will be of greater advantage than training your boys and your girls to be worthy of the blessings of our Heavenly Father.⁹

**A parent's example can lead a child to safety,
righteousness, and happiness.**

Let us be examples of righteousness to our children, have our family prayers and ask the blessing upon the food. Let our children see that as husbands and wives we are affectionate with one another. While there is yet time take the opportunity as husbands and wives to bless each other with your love, with your kindness and your helpfulness in every way. Take opportunity while there is yet time to teach your sons and daughters how to live to be happy. . . . Let our homes be sanctuaries of peace and hope and love.¹⁰

Only a few days ago I saw a letter from a man who had probably lived half his life. In writing to his father he said: "Your consideration for your loved ones, your teaching of me, the examples that you set me, have been an inspiration for me to do what the Lord would have me do. I have felt in following in your footsteps I would be safe." That was a wise father, that was a blessed father, who could plant in the mind of his son such confidence. . . . Because of the conduct of the father—at least he gave his father credit in his



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letter—because of the example set in his home, he is today one of the stalwarts of this Church. He can live in the world and keep the commandments of the Lord. His anxiety to do good was inspired by the home in which he lived. He did not discover selfishness in the home, but unselfishness. The parents were not anxious to get all that they could and hold it selfishly for their own, but they went about seeking those who needed them, encouraging and blessing them. All the talking in the world would not have put into that man’s heart that which he has today, but it was the example that was set by his parents, by those who lived in the home in which he lived.

I have no doubt there are hundreds of men and women, thousands of them, perhaps, in the communities in which we live and in the world, who would say the same thing of the teachings of their fathers and their mothers. But I fear there are some of us who

are influenced by the customs of the world and are obsessed with the idea that we have to follow the crowd regardless of what they believe or do. In that case our example will not be a blessing but may destroy the happiness of our children.¹¹

Let us bear witness in our daily acts, as well as in our conversation, that we believe this is the Father's work and joy inexpressible will come to us, and the children that grow up in our homes will increase in faith and humility. They will be added upon, and be given power to turn aside the shafts of the adversary that are directed towards them, and in place of the distress that has afflicted the children of men, because of sinfulness, there will be comfort, peace and happiness, and . . . men and women will inhabit this earth who will have strength of character to put aside the evils of life.¹² [See suggestion 4 on page 244.]

**By loving and teaching our youth, we can
help safeguard them from evil.**

Latter-day Saints, teach your children to observe the moral law. Surround them as by the arms of your love, that they may have no desire whatsoever to partake of the temptations to evil that surround them on every hand. . . .

What a privilege it is for parents to sit down in their own homes, surrounded by a family of pure boys and girls given to them by our Heavenly Father, their spirits begotten by our Father in Heaven! What a joy it is to have them mingle together partaking of the blessings of our Heavenly Father and rejoicing in the companionship of his Spirit, and to have them so trained in their younger days that while developing to maturity they have maintained the purity of their lives!

My brethren and sisters, I plead with you that with more earnestness, with more thoughtfulness, more patience than ever before, you safeguard the rising generation from the pitfalls that the adversary has laid for their feet. Many of our [movies], radio programs, magazines, books, etc., are unfit . . . , and unless we neutralize the influence of these things by wholesome teaching and environment, bringing to the youth the benefits derived from knowing the lives of

good men and women, teaching them the virtues of the prophets and the meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, some of those whom we love may slip away from us. . . .

Let us teach our children to be pure in their lives, to be upright. Teach your boys to safeguard the virtue of their sisters and their girl companions. Teach your daughters to safeguard the virtue of the boys they associate with. . . . Let us major, if we may use that term, in rearing our boys and girls under the influence of the Spirit of God, that the adversary will have no power to lead them astray.¹³ [See suggestions 5 and 6 on page 244.]

**Studying the gospel as a family will help
us keep our children close to us.**

In our homes, brethren and sisters, it is our privilege, it is our duty, to call our families together to enjoy and strengthen and sustain each other, to be taught the truths of the Holy Scriptures. In every home, children should be encouraged to read the word of the Lord as it has been revealed to us in all dispensations. We should read the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price; not only read it in our homes, but also explain it to our children that they may understand the . . . dealings of God with the peoples of the earth.

Let us see if we cannot do more of this in the future than we have done in the past. Let us commit ourselves to the principle and the practice of gathering our families around us in our own homes. Let each one of us ask himself: “Have I done my duty in my home in reading and in teaching the gospel, as it has been revealed through the prophets of the Lord? Have I kept my children close to me and made home a pleasant place and a place of reverence, love, understanding, and devotion?”

If we have not, let us repent of our neglect and draw our families around us and teach them the truth. . . .

“Have I set my house in order?” This should be the query in every heart. Not, has my neighbor done so? but, have *I* done what the Lord has required of me?¹⁴

Our children are the most precious gift that our Father bestows upon us. If we can guide their feet in the pathway of salvation, there will be joy eternal for us and for them. . . .

One way in which we can keep them closer to us is for us to meet together oftener in our homes. The Church has asked that there be set aside at least one home night each week for all the family to meet together and to enjoy each other's company, to enjoy the simple pleasures of the family fireside, and to discuss with each other those things which are of great and lasting worth.

. . . In 1915 the First Presidency wrote of this to "presidents of stakes, bishops, and parents in Zion," and I quote from what they then said:

"We advise and urge the inauguration of a 'Home Evening' throughout the Church, at which time fathers and mothers may gather their boys and girls about them in the home, and teach them the word of the Lord. . . . This 'Home Evening' should be devoted to prayer, singing hymns, songs, instrumental music, Scripture reading, family topics, and specific instruction on the principles of the gospel, and on the ethical problems of life, as well as the duties and obligations of children to parents, the home, the Church, society, and the nation."

And this was the promised blessing to those who would do what was asked:

"If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them."

These principles and promises are still before us.¹⁵

If the home evening could only be a fact among the Latter-day Saints, if during one evening a week we would live with our own, under the influence of the spirit of the Lord, at our own firesides surrounded by those whom the Lord has given unto us, and told us, particularly, that we should instruct them, how many happy



*“If the home evening could only be a fact among the Latter-day Saints,
 . . . how many happy homes there would be.”*

homes there would be where today there is sorrow and discord and distress. . . .

. . . When we shut out the world and the things of the outside, and under the power of prayer and thanksgiving we give to our sons and daughters those rich truths that the Lord has deposited with us for our welfare and for theirs, a genuine development of faith will follow. I hope that it will be possible for us to return, if we have departed from that advice. Gather our children around us and let our homes be the abiding place of the Spirit of the Lord. If we will do our part, we may know and be sure that our Heavenly Father will do his.¹⁶ [See suggestion 7 on page 245.]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–vii.

1. Think about the story on pages 233–35. Why do you think George Albert Smith was able to teach his daughter Edith so successfully? Think about a time from your youth when a parent taught you something that was influential in your life. Why was that lesson so effective?
2. Study the first section of teachings (pages 235–36) and Doctrine and Covenants 93:37–40. Why do you think the Lord has given parents, rather than other organizations, the responsibility to teach their children the gospel? How can Church organizations help parents with this responsibility? How can extended family members help? If you do not have children of your own, consider ways you can be a righteous influence on the youth of the Church in a way that is supportive to parents.
3. Review the story on pages 237–38. How do children benefit when their parents spend time with them? What are some of “the cares and . . . pleasures of life” (page 236) that can cause us to neglect our responsibilities for our families? What can we do to overcome these distractions?
4. Read the section that begins on page 238. Think about your attitudes toward “the customs of the world” and how those attitudes may affect your children. What are some “daily acts” that bear particularly strong witness of our beliefs to our children?
5. What are some of the temptations that children and youth face in your community? Study the section that begins on page 240, looking for things parents, grandparents, and others can do to help the youth withstand temptation.
6. President Smith counseled that we should “major,” or specialize, in rearing our children under the influence of the Spirit (see page 241). What does that mean to you? What kinds of things can parents do to specialize in raising their children in righteousness?

7. On pages 242–43, President Smith reviews some of the promises that are made to families who hold regular family home evenings. How have these promises been fulfilled in your family? What advice would you give to a family who has never held family home evening before but wants to begin?

Related Scriptures: Proverbs 22:6; Isaiah 54:13; Enos 1:1–3; Mosiah 4:14–15; Alma 56:45–48; Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–31; see also “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

Teaching help: “Be careful not to end good discussions too soon in an attempt to present all the material you have prepared. Although it is important to cover the material, it is more important to help learners feel the influence of the Spirit, resolve their questions, increase their understanding of the gospel, and deepen their commitment to keep the commandments” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, 64).

Notes

1. “After Eighty Years,” *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1950, 263.
2. Edith Smith Elliott, “No Wonder We Love Him,” *Relief Society Magazine*, June 1953, 367.
3. “To the Relief Society,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1932, 708–9.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1926, 145.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1933, 72.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 36.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1926, 146–47.
8. “President Smith Gives Scouting Address,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 22, 1947, Church section, 8.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1948, 181.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1941, 101.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 35.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 1913, 29.
13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1932, 24–25.
14. “The Family Hour,” *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1948, 248.
15. “The Family Hour,” 201.
16. In Conference Report, Apr. 1926, 145–46.



“Remember the example of the Divine Master, who, when suspended upon the cruel tree, said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’”