

“Behold Your Little Ones”

LEARNING TO TEACH CHILDREN

“[Jesus] took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. . . . And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones” (3 Nephi 17:21, 23).

If you are a parent or have been called to teach children, you have been given a great gift. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “[You] are the ones God has appointed to encircle today’s children with love and the fire of faith and an understanding of who they are.”¹

Children will bring you joy and prompt you to be a good example. As you come to recognize the faithfulness, love, trust, and hope of children, you will grow closer to the Lord and better understand His commandment to “become as little children” (Matthew 18:3).

Here are eight things to remember about children as you strive to love and teach them the way the Savior does.

1. *Children are believing.* They are receptive to the truth. Teach them correct doctrine simply and clearly, with language and examples they can understand.

2. *Children can recognize the influence of the Spirit.* Teach them that the feelings of peace, love, and joy they have when they talk or sing about Jesus Christ and His gospel come from the Holy Ghost. Help them understand that these feelings are part of a testimony.

3. *Children understand ideas literally.* Complex metaphors may confuse them. When you teach, refer to familiar events and activities: home, family, and the world around them.

4. *Children are eager to learn.* They enjoy learning through varied experiences and multiple senses. They

respond especially well to visual aids and involvement in lessons. Allow them to move about, explore, and try new things.

5. *Children are eager to share and help.* They have things they can teach each other and you. Invite them to share what they are learning. Give them opportunities to read scriptures, hold pictures, answer questions, or write on the board.

6. *Children are loving and want to be loved.* Look for opportunities to reinforce the kind and loving behavior that comes naturally to them. Build their confidence by expressing your love and appreciation and by listening attentively to what they say.

7. *Children follow your example.* You are always teaching, even when you are not aware of it. Children will notice how you live the principles you are teaching. Your righteous example can have a powerful influence on their developing testimonies.

8. *Little children tend to have short attention spans.* Inattentive behavior might mean that they are tired or

hungry, that they do not understand something you have said, that they need to move, or that they are bored. They enjoy learning through repetition, variety, simple stories, songs, and activities. Encourage them to participate in lessons. ■

For more ideas, see “Teach the Children” in the new manual Teaching in the Savior’s Way (online at teaching.lds.org).

NOTE

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 60.

LESSON RESOURCES

Need a story, visual aid, or video to enrich a Primary or family home evening lesson but don’t know how to find it? Visit lessonhelps.lds.org! You’ll find helpful material organized by Primary lesson, gospel topic, and category. Each week you’ll also find a new teaching tip.