

TEACHING Gospel Standards — ONE FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE

Here are some ways our family has been able to apply the principles from "My Gospel Standards."

By Jocelyn Christensen

Clean Language

When our oldest child started school, we struggled to figure out how to prepare him for the inappropriate language he might hear from other children. In the end, we came up with this guideline: "If you hear someone using a word that you have never heard Mom or Dad use at home, then ask us what it means before using it yourself." We have also taught our children to pay attention to how certain words make them feel.

We also taught a family home evening lesson about using C.L.E.A.N. language:

- C – Choose your words carefully.
- L – Learn the meanings of words before using them.
- E – Encourage others with the words you say.
- A – Avoid slang or replacement words.
- N – Never use hurtful or vulgar language.

Although we tried to make these guidelines easy to remember and reviewed them often, we wondered how much our children would retain. One day when our children were playing outside, I overheard one of my daughters say to the other, "You shouldn't say that! Remember, you should 'encourage others with the words you say!'" They had been listening, after all.

Music

One day in the car a song came on the radio that was popular in my youth but which didn't reflect the music

standards I had committed to living. After a moment, I turned the song off. With a big sigh of relief, my son said, "Thanks for turning that off, Mom!" I explained to my son that sometimes it's hard even as adults to make good choices but that we *all* must work hard *every day* to keep the standards.

That experience reminded me just how much my children depend on me to make correct choices. It also showed me that involving my children in my efforts to choose virtue can strengthen our entire family in our resolve to live the standards.

Modesty

When our children were still young, I realized that teaching them to value modesty over the fashion of the day would be harder to do later, so I'd better start now.

First I examined my own wardrobe. "My Gospel Standards" says, "I will dress modestly to show respect for Heavenly Father and myself." I wanted to make sure I was dressing myself out of respect for Heavenly Father, not out of respect for the standards of the world.

Next I looked at my children's clothing. Some of the outfits that we had received secondhand were not modest enough to meet the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. So we took them out of our clothing rotation and replaced them with more modest clothing as our budget allowed. We try to remind our children that their beauty comes from inside of them, not from their clothes.



Loving Others

In my efforts to teach my children gospel standards, I realized they also depend on me to model love and acceptance of other people, regardless of how those people look.

Some time ago, while several other women and I were waiting to pick up our children from preschool, I noticed that some of the moms were dressed provocatively and were pierced and tattooed and that there wasn't much social interaction between them and the moms who maintained a more modest appearance. So one day I struck up a conversation with one of the moms from the first group, and although I didn't expect to have much in common with her, we quickly became friends. Since then, this mother's family has joined us for Church functions and birthday parties, and our daughters have enjoyed frequent play dates together.

As we make efforts to be kind and friendly to those who don't share our beliefs, all the while holding firmly to our standards, our example may not only encourage our own children to be kind but also influence other families to be charitable toward those they see as "different." In this and other ways, we can make "My Gospel Standards" not just a list of declarations but a way of life. ■

The author lives in Pennsylvania, USA.