

14 Responsibility of Parents

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The goal of every faithful parent is to have their children embrace the same gospel that means so much to them. Unfortunately, almost *all* emotional pain that righteous parents feel is because others, in particular their children, exercise their own agency to their detriment. Satan was cast out of heaven because of rebellion and because he sought to “destroy the agency of man.” He wanted to control and guarantee the salvation of mankind. Many a parent seeks to do the same with their children. Children in time will have their own agency. All that a good parent can hope to accomplish is to teach them how to use it correctly and righteously. Of course that requires understanding what it means to “act in futurity;” understanding why each individual must ‘come unto Christ;’ understanding what it means to have faith in Christ; understanding that their faith testimony should be in Christ and His Atonement; and understanding that they may use their agency to choose freedom and eternal life or captivity and death. All must understand that freedom and agency is the *power of exaltation or the power of damnation*. These powers are initiated by the act of choosing good or evil—even (and perhaps especially) while in the presence of the other. There are good and evil forces that surround each person, pulling opposite directions, enticing us toward good or toward evil in a struggle that cannot be greater in one direction than the other. The *tie of good and evil* is broken only by the power of agency as choices are made that propel the individual toward the freedom of exaltation or towards captivity and spiritual death.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

The faith and testimony of the sons of Helaman first required the faith and testimonies of the **parents** of the sons of Helaman. The faith of these young men could not exist without the teachings and examples of their parents. This was a commitment and covenant so sacred that their fathers suffered death rather than fail in their commitment and covenant to God. When coupled with the same faith and testimony of their mothers, they '*could not doubt*.' This responsibility cannot be passed on to the Scout Leader, the Sunday School Teacher, or the Young Women and Young Men's leader. The salvation of a child is not a responsibility that can be passed on to the Bishop, Stake President, or any other priesthood leader or teacher. A parent cannot leave the responsibility of building the faith and testimonies of their children to somebody else. Every individual must discover his or her own faith and testimony. Every member of the church should be a convert to Christ, His gospel, and the Atonement. Parents should help provide opportunities for children to discover and strengthen their own faith, founded in Christ. The sons of Helaman gave the credit for their faith and testimonies to their mothers, not to their Young Men's leader.

Notice the Lord's directive about what parents are to teach their children:

25 And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, *that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost* by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. (D&C 68:25)

This is an admonition for parents to teach their children *to understand* the gospel, placing their faith and testimonies in “*Christ the Son of the Living God*”—not in the vehicle of the administration of the gospel, but in the Son of God and His Plan of Salvation. Of course, this passage assumes that the parents also understand the doctrine. Notice that the requirement is to teach children to understand so that they (the children) may find their faith and testimony.

The Savior, introducing the verses that follow, gives this instructional command to the parents in Zion. He (the Lord) is about to describe some of the problems facing every generation, explaining why a testimony founded in Christ must be taught.

31 Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; *they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity*, but their eyes are full of greediness. (D&C 68:31-32)

An Ancient and Latter-day Problem

The Lord explains in Section 68 that because the youth “seek not earnestly the riches of eternity,” the falling away has already begun. Likewise Isaiah, seeing our day, explains that eventually music will become more important than things sacred, as the children in every dispensation will begin to focus on things temporal in nature.

12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, *neither consider the operation of his hands*.

13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, *because they have no knowledge*: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. (Isaiah 5:12-13)

Inspired, Isaiah warns that in the last days music will become more important than “*the works of the Lord*” and the “*operation of his hands*.” The neglect of the ‘work of God’ will lead to famine and captivity because of a lack of knowledge and understanding. As noted in an earlier chapter, the spiritual focus of the youth, be it right or wrong, will eventually affect the older generation as parents begin to fail in their faith because of the sins of the rising generation (3 Nephi 1: 30).

After being 'driven' out of the Garden of Eden the first parents of this temporal and probationary world received a command similar to that of D&C 68. According to tradition, *not* canonized scripture, many teach that Adam and Eve knew and understood the gospel before they were driven out of Eden. This traditional understanding is usually based on the belief that Eve’s actions in the Garden were motivated by an understanding of the gospel plan that required her to do 'x' in order for 'y' to happen. However, a careful reading of Moses 5 reveals that there were at least three generations living outside the Garden of Eden *before* Adam and Eve received any knowledge about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation. Before the Fall there was no death or separation from God in the garden, thus no need for the gospel or the plan of salvation. They were in an immortal state of innocence. It is explained that “*if*” they partook of the fruit, “*then*” a Savior would be provided to restore that which would be lost in their transgression and fall: their immortality and the presence of God. After the Fall, Adam and his wife Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden to begin their life in a new and terrifying environment. Only then, after several generations, were they taught the gospel and the plan of salvation.

2 And Adam knew his wife, and *she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth.*

3 And from that time forth, *the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and to tend flocks, and they also begat sons and daughters.*

4 And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.

5 And *he gave unto them commandments*, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should *offer the firstlings of their flocks*, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

6 And *after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?* And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

7 And then the angel spake, saying: *This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.*

8 Wherefore, *thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.* (Moses 5:2-8)

The details of what Adam and Eve were taught when they received the light and truth they were seeking is found in Moses 6:51-68, where Enoch quotes from the Book of Adam:

56 And it is given unto them to know good from evil; wherefore they are agents unto themselves, and I have given unto you another law and commandment.

57 Wherefore *teach it unto your children*, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.

58 Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to *teach these things freely unto your children, saying:*

59 That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory;

60 For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified;

62 And now, behold, I say unto you: *This is the plan of salvation* unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time. (Moses 6:56-62)

Notice: The main responsibility Adam and Eve had after receiving the gospel was to teach it to their children:

57 Wherefore *teach it unto your children*, that all men, everywhere, must repent...

58 Therefore *I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children...* (Moses 6:57-58)

When Adam receives the gospel he is commanded *twice* to teach these things (the gospel) *freely* (all the time) to his children. Their testimony needs to be in Christ and in His gospel and nothing else. How are parents supposed to teach Christ and the gospel *freely* to their children? Moses was given a testimony-building exercise that was directed toward the youth and the rising generation:

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7 And thou shalt *teach them diligently unto thy children*, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

In other words, children should be taught the gospel “freely” or *ALL THE TIME*, so that they can begin to come to an understanding of *why* they need a Savior, who that Savior is, and how their salvation depends upon their relationship with Him and the Atonement. D&C 93 states that it was given to know how and who we should worship:

19 I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and *know how to worship, and know what you worship*, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fullness.

Each Sunday during the sacrament meeting, participants covenant to “always remember Him.” There is a good reason why Moses was commanded to teach the parents to *always discuss* the works of the Lord, and why we make the same covenant at the symbolic sacrificial altar of the Lamb of God. Again, the gospel is new to every generation, and testimonies are not passed on genetically nor are they purchased cheaply or by proxy.

Not only is the gospel new to each generation, the sins of Israel (those who know the gospel) are the sins of Israel in every generation and every dispensation. The evil and sins that plagued one generation will plague each generation, and the problems that exist in the first dispensation will show up in every dispensation. As the prophet Joseph Smith explained, the “nature of man has not changed since the beginning” (*TPJS*, p. 60).

One of the primary responsibilities of parents is to teach the gospel of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost to each generation, with the divine injunction to teach the children to *understand* the gospel of Christ so that they will, when converted, place their faith and testimony in Christ and His Atonement. The same focus is mentioned by Nephi in the Book of Mormon. Living under the Law of Moses, Nephi explains that the educational thrust of the parents and church organization should be centered in Christ.

23 For we labor diligently to write, to ***persuade our children***, and also our brethren, ***to believe in Christ***, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

24 And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with *steadfastness unto Christ*, until the law shall be fulfilled.

25 For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and *we are made alive in Christ because of our faith*; yet we keep the law because of the commandments.

26 And *we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.*

27 Wherefore, *we speak concerning the law that our children may know* the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may *look forward unto that life which is in Christ*, and know for what end the law was given. And after the law is fulfilled in Christ, that they need not harden their hearts against him when the law ought to be done away. (2 Nephi 25:23-27)

Entropy

There are many theories in science, but very few laws. A scientific law must be “observable and repeatable.” One of those “laws” is that of *Entropy*, or the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The law of Entropy states that:

Everything moves from a state of order to a state of disorder, *unless an independent source of outside energy is infused*. Otherwise, everything will continue to deteriorate, decompose and otherwise move from a state of order to a state of disorder.

The law of entropy is at work not only in the biological and physical world. It affects language, speech, the written word, faith, religions, and testimonies. Entropy is alive and well in the lives of the members of the church today, both adults and youth. As mentioned earlier, parents who do not put more spiritual energy into their children than was put into them risk raising children who will become less active in the gospel. To ensure that the testimonies of our members and children are stronger, there must be *more outside energy* put into gospel instruction and practice than was offered the older generation or faith will wane and testimonies will fail.

To review: The gospel is new to every generation and testimonies are not genetic. Faith does not pass from one generation to another without increased energy. Because of this entropy (which is illustrated over and over in the Book of Mormon), righteousness and wickedness (i.e. the traditions of the fathers) lasts only until the third and fourth generation (2 Nephi 26:9-10).

9 But the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him, *until three generations shall have passed away, and many of the fourth generation shall have passed away in righteousness.*

10 And when these things have passed away, a speedy destruction cometh unto my people; for, notwithstanding the pains of my soul, I have seen it; wherefore, I know that it shall come to pass; and they sell themselves for naught; for, for the reward of their pride and their foolishness they shall reap destruction; for because they yield unto the devil and choose works of darkness rather than light, therefore they must go down to hell. (2 Nephi 26:9-10)

12 Yea, and this because they shall dwindle in unbelief and fall into the works of darkness, and lasciviousness, and all manner of iniquities; yea, I say unto you, that because *they shall sin against so great light and knowledge*, yea, I say unto you, that from that day, *even the*

fourth generation shall not all pass away before this great iniquity shall come. (Alma 45:12)

In time, every organization will experience some sort of spiritual complacency. Nephi warned that the church should be careful not to cry “all is well in Zion, yea Zion prospereth”, for history shows that its not until the fourth and fifth generation (almost when it is too late) that people will begin to question it. This is a historical fact, observed over and over again in history and scripture. Based on generational life spans, called the *Saeculum* (as discussed earlier), a study of the past becomes a reflective *Saeculum* of the future. Thus, the Book of Mormon, when viewed as a *prophetic history*, warns all readers that this sacred record of a fallen people (entropy) has the potential to become a *historical prophecy* for all saints in all dispensations.

The Book of Mormon is a witness and testimony of this concept as the cycles of faith and falling away are only overcome by faith and testimony in Christ and His Atonement. The personal cure and outside energy required to overcome *spiritual entropy* is knowledge, coupled with the action of active faith. Abraham, in his statement about the connection between activity and knowledge, taught his readers how he, and thus all, might overcome spiritual entropy:

2 ...having been myself *a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and...desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God,* I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. (Abraham 1:2)