

Essential Conversations

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We cannot wait for conversion to simply happen to our children. Accidental conversion is not a principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I absolutely love this topic because I have run smackdab into this conversation so many times in my life dealing with members, it might actually crack the top ten... This concept does not simply apply to young children, so if you don't have young children don't zone out and go somewhere else, this concept applies to almost everything as this concept applies to "the gathering of Israel", which according to Joseph Smith, "[the gathering of Israel] is a principle I esteem to be of the greatest importance **to those who are looking for salvation in this generation**" (TPJS, Section Two 1834-37, p.83) Accidental conversion [or "gathering"] of your friends, family, and loved ones in and out of the gospel is not something we can simply wait for it to happen, accidental conversion is not a principle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever wondered why we call Primary "Primary"? While the name refers to spiritual learning children receive in their earliest years, to me it is also a reminder of a powerful truth. To our Heavenly Father, children have *never* been secondary—they have *always* been "primary."¹

I thought primary was called primary for the same reason "Gospel Principles" was called "Gospel Principles", because it was the place to teach and learn the "gospel principles" of the gospel... We don't call "gospel principles" this because the people in the class are the "gospel principles of the class", but rather what we expect to teach and learn. "Primary" means what?

Primary education, also called elementary education, is for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. Primary education provides students with a basic understanding of various subjects as well as the skills they will use throughout their lives. (learn.org)

All of God's children are His "primary focus":

Moses 1: 39:

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."

He doesn't pay special treatment to any specific group over another; "chosen people of the Lord" simply refers to those choice souls in this life who are making covenants with the Lord and keeping them- but the Lord's invitation to accept those covenants and live accordingly applies to all mankind equally- some more than others simply accept the call, and it is up to those who have been called to make their "calling and election sure", by "living by every word which proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" in this life... I love these scripture chains, they bring me such joy reading them again and again:

D&C 84:

44 For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

D&C 98:

11 And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Deuteronomy 8:

3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Moroni 7:

25 Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ.

D&C 1:

38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

D&C 45:

31 And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

32 But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

D&C 124:

45 And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place

3 Nephi 24:

16 Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

“[For] the time is coming when we will be mixed up in these now peaceful valleys to that extent that it will be difficult to tell the face of a Saint from the face of an enemy to the people of God. Then, brethren, look out for the great sieve, for there will be a great sifting time, and many will fall; for I say unto you there is a test, a Test, a TEST coming, and who will be able to stand? This church has before it many close places through which it must pass before the work of God is crowned with victory. To meet the difficulties that are coming it will be necessary for you to have knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. If you have not got the testimony, live right and call upon the Lord and cease not ‘till you obtain it. If you do not, you will not stand... Then the Prophet Joseph and others will make their appearance and those who have remained faithful will be selected to return to Jackson County, Missouri and take part in the building of that beautiful city, the New Jerusalem.”

- **Elder Heber C. Kimball** (May 1868, in Deseret News, 23 May 1931; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1930, p. 58-59; Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945, p. 446.)

This is right where we are right now... This can't be stated enough- the Lord's primary focus is on "His Jewels" and as cute as it is to say "that means primary kids", we can't lose focus on the whole to make a point on a specific that isn't even accurate.

He trusts us to value, respect, and protect them as children of God. That means we never harm them physically, verbally, or emotionally in any way, even when tensions and pressures run high. Instead we *value* children, and we do all we can to combat the evils of abuse. Their care is primary to us—as it is to Him.²

This is so subjective it basically is entirely worthless. Everyone reads this and goes “yes, that is 100% true!” but then everyone looks at each other's parenting and says “that parent is abusive!” For context, Joseph Smith taught:

*A parent may whip a child, **and justly, too**, because he stole an apple; whereas if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the pleasure of the apple would have been secured, all the misery of stealing lost. (TPJS, Section Five 1842-43, p.256)*

The Father is the perfect example of being a Father, and He uses famine (going to bed hungry), sword (spanking/whipping), etc. to teach His children appropriately in appropriate situations. Many of these things today would be deemed “abusive”, and looking at the world today is it any wonder? Parents have become bad parents, it is as simple as that. Period. Full stop. Isaiah saw this:

Isaiah 3:

12 And as for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they who lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths.

In the student manual the church puts out, it says on those Isaiah verses:

2 Nephi 13:12. “Undermining of the Home and Family”

Elder Ezra Taft Benson saw the prophecy in 2 Nephi 13:12 as having a fulfillment in our own day: “And so today, the undermining of the home and family is on the increase, with the devil anxiously working to displace the father as the head of the home and create rebellion among the children. The Book of Mormon describes this condition when it states, ‘And my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.’ And then these words follow—and consider these words seriously when you think of those political leaders who are promoting birth control and abortion: ‘O my people, they who lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths.’ (2 Ne. 13:12.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, p. 21).

One young mother and father sat at their kitchen table reviewing their day. From down the hall, they heard a thud. The mother asked, “What was that?”

Then they heard a soft cry coming from their four-year-old son’s bedroom. They rushed down the hall. There he was, lying on the floor next to his bed. The mother picked up the little boy and asked him what had happened.

He said, “I fell out of bed.”

She said, “Why did you fall out of bed?”

He shrugged and said, “I don’t know. I guess I just didn’t get far enough in.”

It is about this “getting far enough in” that I would like to speak this morning. It is our privilege and responsibility to help children “get far enough in” to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we cannot begin too soon.

Here is where I would segue in it also being our responsibility to help “children *in the gospel* get far enough in”... My paper “The Watchman” has about 45 minutes of breaking this down, and instead of simply repeating everything, let me summarize:

*“We will attain our exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom **only on the condition that we share with our Father’s other children the blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ** and observe the commandments that will enrich our lives here and hereafter”*

- **President George Albert Smith:** (Sharing the Gospel with Others, 190 or PMG p.12)

It is our job as members to open our mouths and share the gospel and if we don’t we will be held accountable, as Moroni so clearly taught:

“Behold, could ye suppose that ye could sit upon your thrones, and because of the exceeding goodness of God ye could do nothing and he would deliver you? Behold, if ye have supposed this ye have supposed in vain. Do ye suppose that, because so many of your brethren have been killed it is because of their wickedness? I say unto you, if ye have supposed this ye have supposed in vain; for I say unto you, there are many who have fallen by the sword; and behold it is to your condemnation”

- **Moroni** (Alma 60: 11-12)

So it is our job to, once warned, warn our neighbors and lift them up (Doctrine and Covenants 88:81–85) and if we don’t/won’t their blood will be upon us. And that is if we don’t do, what if we do evil? What if we teach people to go against the keys of God and follow after their “own gods”? (D&C 1: 16) The Lord warned again such:

“And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

-**Jesus the Christ** (Matthew 18: 5-10)

Matthew 18:5–10. A Warning Not to Offend Little Ones

Though Jesus was speaking to leaders of His day when He issued a stern warning not to offend little ones, the message recorded in Matthew 18:5–10 applies to all of us (see D&C 50:40–41 for a broader definition of “little children”). We must not cause anyone seeking greater understanding of the gospel plan to stumble in their faith, nor should we do anything to block their progress toward eternal life. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught about this warning:

“Few crimes are as gross and wicked as that of teaching false doctrine and leading souls away from God and salvation. ... If eternal joy is the reward given those who teach the truth and bring souls to salvation, shall not those who teach false doctrines and lead souls to damnation receive as their reward eternal remorse? (D. & C. 18:10–16.)

“... It is better to die and be denied the blessings of continued mortal existence than to live and lead souls from the truth, thereby gaining eternal damnation for oneself” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:420).

If you don’t believe in the Lord’s prophet, at least be honest about it! If you don’t believe that the words of the Lord will be fulfilled literally and plainly, at least be honest about it! If you want to curse God and die spiritually, which is exactly what you are doing, be honest about it and just go

away and curse God and die in the corner. For the love of mercy, don't take people down with you! Don't become the wolf in sheep's clothing for the Lord said of such it would be better if they just died (Matthew 18:6-10). Stand in holy places! Stand with the prophets! Stand with the Lord! When the Lord says He will do something, He will literally do it! If you wish to curse God and die do so quietly, not proudly and vocally over YouTube, for it will be better for you to just die then to continue doing what you are doing.

There is a uniquely special time in children's lives when they are protected from Satan's influence. It is a time when they are innocent and sin free.³

There were some people who got upset at this comment because it seemed vague and some might have thought it meant that children are free from possessions, evil men, etc. when in fact it was simply referring to Satan's influence to "tempt", which is made clear in her footnote:

Doctrine and Covenants 29:46–47

46 But behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten;

47 Wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me;

It is a sacred time for parent and child. Children are to be taught, by word and example, before and after they have "arrived unto the years of accountability before God."⁴

Her footnote:

Doctrine and Covenants 20:71

71 No one can be received into the church of Christ unless he has arrived unto the years of accountability before God, and is capable of repentance.

This is a pet-peeve of mine, members saying that "the age of accountability for our generation is..." or "kids have aged differently in different ages..." etc. etc. etc. All wrong.

JST Genesis 11:

11 And I will establish a covenant of circumcision with thee, and it shall be my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, that thou mayest know forever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old.

So please, let's put that one 6 feet under...

President Henry B. Eyring taught: "We have the greatest opportunity with the young. The best time to teach is early, while children are still immune to the temptations of [the] mortal enemy, and long before the words of truth may be harder for them to hear in the noise of their personal struggles."⁵

Once again, we are confirming that we are talking about being free from temptations.

Such teaching will help them realize their divine identity, their purpose, and the rich blessings that await them as they make sacred covenants and receive ordinances along the covenant path.

Proverbs 22: 6

6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

We did a fireside called “Train up a Child” that I’d highly recommend people take the time to go over covering this subject

We cannot wait for conversion to simply happen to our children. Accidental conversion is *not* a principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Becoming like our Savior will not happen randomly. Being intentional in loving, teaching, and testifying can help children begin at a young age to feel the influence of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is essential to our children’s testimony of and conversion to Jesus Christ; we desire them to “always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them.”⁶

That is gold, we need to stop pretending like if we give kids a bunch of blocks and walk away, we will come back and find a castle- likewise, we need to stop pretending like we can just dump a Book of Mormon off on Tuesday and wait at church Sunday morning for them to show up... We need to be there to help show them the way- we need to be there combing children’s hair and helping them cope with getting ready for church on Sunday, in some cases for the very first time. Once men and women are strong enough to stand on their own they should stand on their own, but that does not mean we all learn to walk on our own. This principle applies to everything- we need to take more actions today to help intentionally create growth in the proper direction for all God’s children within our spheres of influence.

Consider the value of family conversations about the gospel of Jesus Christ, *essential* conversations, that can invite the Spirit. When we have such conversations with our children, we help them create a foundation, “which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if [they] build they cannot fall.”⁷ When we strengthen a child, we strengthen the family.

These vital discussions can lead children to:

- Understand the doctrine of repentance.
- Have faith in Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Choose baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost when eight years old.⁸
- And pray and “walk uprightly before the Lord.”⁹

She drops a doozy of a reference there at 8, and does so quietly without really talking about it, ties in directly with the same concepts we have already gone over as well as what is gone over in depth in my paper “The Watchman” already referenced above, and that is this:

Doctrine and Covenants 68:25

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.

The other references are pretty self-explanatory, no real further depth to be explored

The Savior urged, “Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things *freely* unto your children.”¹⁰ And what did He want us to teach so freely?

1. The Fall of Adam
2. The Atonement of Jesus Christ
3. The importance of being born again¹¹

She references here:

Moses 6:59

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;

I love this reference as it makes me think back to this quote from Joseph Smith:

*“The spirit of **Elias** is first, **Elijah** second, and **Messiah** last. Elias is a forerunner to prepare the way, and the spirit and power of Elijah is to come after, holding the keys of power, building the Temple to the cap stone, placing the seals of the Melchisedec priesthood upon the house of Israel, and making all things ready, then Messiah comes to his temple, which is last of all. Messiah is above the spirit and power of Elijah for he made the world, and was that spiritual rock unto Moses in the Wilderness. Elijah was to come and prepare the way and build up the kingdom, before the coming of the great day of the Lord, although the spirit of Elias might begin it.”* History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844]

If one is curious how this fits back into the prophetic scene as well as the macro last-day timeline I’d check out “The Power of the Lamb” paper that I put together.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson said, “Certainly the adversary is pleased when parents neglect to teach and train their children to have faith in Christ and be spiritually born again.”¹²

In contrast, the Savior would have us help children “put [their] trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good.”¹³ To do so, **we can assist children in recognizing when they are feeling the Spirit and in discerning what actions cause the Spirit to leave.** Thus they learn to repent and return to the light through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This helps encourage spiritual resilience.

Another solid gold point in this talk- sometimes growing up in the church surrounded by the influence of the Light of Christ as well as the Holy Ghost, it is actually easier for us to recognize when the influence *leaves* rather than when it shows up. Missionaries on the other hand teaching those who are most likely oblivious this influence will need for you to teach them of the influence and how to recognize it before it comes, and then when it comes don't ask them "what do you feel?" **TELL THEM**, what they are feeling... "Brother Jones, what you are feeling right now, is the Holy Ghost confirming what we just said is true. Take a moment, feel it, listen closely..." the next thing you need to do as a missionary is LEAVE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE... They also aren't use to the feeling of the influence leaving, and if a missionary lingers the Holy Ghost's influence will also deflate- if one reaches the point of edification, commits, and then leaves ASAP, the investigator will literally feel the Holy Ghost go *whoosh* out the door with the missionaries. This will help them learn how to recognize the Holy Ghost's influence when it is there as well as when it leaves and will leave them with the choice of "doing what it takes to keep this feeling with me always"... Teaching children is not (or at least shouldn't be) any different. Both are children in the gospel. Members expecting converts entering the church to possess knowledge beyond that of an 8 year old child of record are displaying blatant ignorance to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Plan of Salvation... What you ask of that 8 year old being baptized is exactly what is being asked of that adult, and in some cases if not most cases, the child being raised in the church and in primary is FURTHER ahead than the convert. This is the reality of the Gospel- baptism is the gate to get to the path, it isn't even the path let alone the destination, stop treating it thus! (2 Nephi 31)

We can have fun helping our children build spiritual resilience at any age. It doesn't have to be complicated or time intensive. Simple, caring conversations can lead children to know not only *what* they believe, but most important, *why* they believe it.

A good call out to "the why being transformative", great topic to cover for those who don't know it, I have a paper of the same name.

Caring conversations, happening naturally and consistently, can lead to better understanding and answers. Let's not allow the convenience of electronic devices to keep us from teaching and listening to our children and looking into their eyes.

This talk, like I said, was geared towards children, but man... if this isn't one of the most relevant talks given in a decade on "children in the gospel", i.e. "missionary work"... I get it, "dar missionary work online dar more effective even though our numbers are plummeting dar dar!" I get it! I know! "But look how fast we are moving dar dar we contact a million more people faster dar dar!" yeah, I hear you, but do you hear yourself?!

Doctrine and Covenants 61:

3 But verily I say unto you, that it is not needful for this whole company of mine elders to be moving swiftly upon the waters, whilst the inhabitants on either side are perishing in unbelief.

We need to look people in the eyes, shake hands with them, and embrace them. There is no substitute for this. Period.

As we become more like Christ these caring conversations with children, members, and non-members will happen *NATURALLY* and *CONSISTENTLY*... Period.

Additional opportunities for essential conversations can occur through role-playing.

Like seriously... She is ripping my Teaching for Edification and using it for kids?! Who would have thought about that... Oh that's right! Me... I have a Christ-like attributes book series for kids and a teaching guide for it that do this very thing... I have a paper called "The Power of Teacher; The Power of the Student" where I go over this as well... Teaching skills apply to every field of importance in this world; children being one such. Roleplays are absolutely keys to your success as a teacher in any of those fields...

Family members can act out situations of being tempted or pressured to make a bad choice.

Such an exercise can fortify children to be prepared in a challenging setting. For example, we can act it out and then talk it out as we ask children what they would do:

- If they are tempted to break the Word of Wisdom.
- If they are exposed to pornography.
- If they are tempted to lie, steal, or cheat.
- If they hear something from a friend or teacher at school that disputes their beliefs or values.

As they act it out and then talk it out, rather than being caught unprepared in a hostile peer group setting, children can be armed with "the shield of faith wherewith [they] shall be able to quench *all* the fiery darts of the wicked."¹⁴

This is literally a section in my paper, I call it "anti-anti'ing". If you are unfamiliar with this or want some actual examples of this in action check out my Teaching for Edification series!

A close personal friend learned this crucial lesson as an 18-year-old. He enlisted in the United States military during the conflict between the United States and Vietnam. He was assigned to basic training in the infantry to become a foot soldier. He explained that the training was grueling. He described his drill instructor as cruel and inhumane.

One particular day his squad was dressed in full battle gear, hiking in sweltering heat. The drill instructor suddenly shouted orders to drop to the ground and not move. The instructor was watching for even the *slightest* motion. Any movement would result in serious consequences later on. The squad suffered for more than two hours in the heat with growing anger and resentment toward their leader.

Many months later our friend found himself leading his squad through the jungles of Vietnam. This was real, not just training. Shots began to ring from high in the surrounding trees. The entire squad immediately dropped to the ground.

What was the enemy looking for? Movement. Any motion at all would draw fire. My friend said that as he lay sweating and motionless on the jungle floor, waiting for dark for several long hours, his thoughts reflected back on basic training. He remembered his intense dislike for his drill instructor. Now he felt intense gratitude—for what he had taught him and how he had prepared him for this critical situation. The drill instructor had wisely equipped our friend and his squad with the ability to know what to do when the battle was raging. He had, in effect, saved our friend's life.

This is an absolutely perfect story to illustrate the point and I've used it often in my papers in the last 6 months... People's understanding of this or their being upset by it reflect entirely back on a couple of reasons...

1. It is true, it hit home, and now they are mad (1 Nephi 16: 2)
2. They've lived a boudoir life and now want to treat the world like it should be like their white, western father's living room (Camille Paglia explains this better than most)
3. They've never actually experience real tribulation (like the students in this example above)

People just don't understand the "Father's voice" anymore, everything is in the "mother's voice" (and not a "good mother" at that) people just don't understand chastisement or "hard things" anymore, they just simply are too soft! People can get mad at that now purely because they've never experienced real problems, real suffering, etc. everyone who has experienced these experiences all wish they had knowledge beforehand, and in many cases that they had done things differently. As the Nephites wailed in the night "oh that we had repented, oh that we hadn't stoned the prophets!" i.e. "oh that we had knowledge back then what we know now! Oh that we could go back and do things differently!"

As parents (or for that matter ANYONE on "the watchtower") you know these things, you've seen these things, and in some cases you've experienced them. You have to teach them to other *because* you love them...

How can we do the same for our children spiritually? Long before they enter the battlefield of life, how can we more fully strive to teach, fortify, and prepare them?¹⁵

The reference she put here is FASCINATING considering the last 6 months:

See Russell M. Nelson, "Children of the Covenant," *Ensign*, May 1995, 32:

"Years ago as a young medical student I saw many patients afflicted with diseases that are now preventable. Today it is possible to immunize individuals against conditions that once were disabling—even deadly. One medical method by which acquired immunity is conferred is inoculation. The term inoculate is fascinating. It comes from two Latin roots: in, meaning 'within'; and oculus, meaning 'an eye.' The verb to inoculate, therefore, literally means 'to put an eye within'—to monitor against harm.

"An affliction like polio can cripple or destroy the body. An affliction like sin can cripple or destroy the spirit. The ravages of polio can now be prevented by immunization, but the ravages

of sin require other means of prevention. Doctors cannot immunize against iniquity. Spiritual protection comes only from the Lord—and in his own way. Jesus chooses not to inoculate, but to indoctrinate. His method employs no vaccine; it utilizes the teaching of divine doctrine—a governing ‘eye within’—to protect the eternal spirits of his children.”

How can we do the same for our children indeed? What would be the most important thing we could teach our children early... Hrmmm... I talk about the two things that changed my life, the two lessons that if all members understood and obeyed would change everything, but let's just focus in on one of those shall we with this quote of a man teaching his son one of the most important lessons he could ever learn in life:

“I remember years ago when I was a bishop I had President Heber J. Grant talk to our ward. After the meeting I drove him home. ... Standing by me, he put his arm over my shoulder and said: ‘My boy, you always keep your eye on the President of the Church and if he ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it.’ Then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, ‘But you don’t need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray.’”

- **President Ezra Taft Benson** (Conference Report, October 1960, p. 78.)

How can we invite them to “get far enough in”? Wouldn’t we rather have them “sweat” in the safe learning environment of the home than *bleed on the battlefields of life*?

If members had learned this lesson, had taught their kids this lesson, they would not be watching their children, loved ones, etc. bleeding out as we speak... Lifting up their voices and cursing God and dying... We would see more of them “standing in Holy places and being not moved”...

As I look back, there were times when my husband and I felt like drill instructors in our earnestness to help our children live the gospel of Jesus Christ. The prophet Jacob seemed to voice these same feelings when he said: “I am desirous for the welfare of your souls. Yea, mine anxiety is great for you; and ye yourselves know that it ever has been.”¹⁶

As children learn and progress, their beliefs will be challenged. But as they are properly equipped, they can grow in faith, courage, and confidence, even in the midst of strong opposition.

Once again, amen and amen! This is exactly how we should feel about missionary work as well... A great anxiety for their souls! But we know that if they are properly equipped (example: “anti-anti’ed”) they have a much better chance of success, even when surrounded by strong opposition.

Alma taught us to “prepare the minds of [the] children.”¹⁷ We are preparing the rising generation to be the future defenders of the faith, to understand “that [they] are free to act for [themselves]—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.”¹⁸ Children deserve to understand this great truth: **eternity is the wrong thing to be wrong about.**

She uses the word “deserves” here... I feel like I am a broken record with this word... If all children “deserve” this, wouldn’t that make God an awful parent for not allowing all of us as children to have that childhood? Did the Savior “deserve” to suffer and bleed from every pore? We need to stop doing this at conference- talking about apparent entitlements and more about personal responsibilities. We can’t understand the “deserves” of this life, a life that is *by design* not inherently “fair” because we don’t know or can’t see the full picture. It’s a shame to, because the second line here is a poignant one- this is the one subject we can’t be wrong on, this is the one thing that has consequences that echo throughout eternity.

May our simple yet essential conversations with our children help them to “enjoy the *words* of eternal life” now so that they may enjoy “eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory.”¹⁹

As we nurture and prepare our children, we allow for their agency, we love them with all our heart, we teach them God’s commandments and His gift of repentance, and we never, *ever*, give up on them. After all, isn’t this the Lord’s way with each of us?

This is a great subject to tie into the correct understanding, the correct and primary interpretation of that of the prodigal son... Never give up on your children and never let them give up on you... “Son/daughter... If you leave us, hate us, live in sin and throw every covenant of God over your shoulder we will still love you... and someday the choice will be given to you, ‘go to a lower glory, or go and be a servant in your father’s house’, son/daughter, I pray with all my heart that if you ever have to make that choice, you choose to come back to us”... Let us end this talk with the commitment and testimony of the speaker making them our own:

Let us “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ,” knowing that we can have “a perfect brightness of hope”²⁰ through our loving Savior.

I testify that He is always the answer. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.