

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

Of the Council of the Twelve

● As a people, we have three great loyalties: loyalty to God, loyalty to family, loyalty to country.

I come to you today with a plea to strengthen our families.

The family unit

It has been truly stated that “salvation is a family affair . . . and that the family unit is the most important organization in time or in eternity.”

The Church was created in large measure to help the family, and long after the Church has performed its mission, the celestial patriarchal order will still be functioning. This is why President Joseph F. Smith said: “To be a successful father or a successful mother is greater than to be a successful general or a successful statesman . . .,” and President McKay added: “When one puts business or pleasure above his home, he, that moment, starts on the downgrade to soul weakness.”

And this is why President Harold B. Lee said only yesterday, “The Church must do more to help the home carry out its divine mission.”

Temptations and pitfalls

President Joseph Fielding Smith has stated that never “in the history of the Church have there been so many temptations, so many pitfalls, so many dangers, to lure away the members of the Church from the path of duty and from righteousness as we find today.” (*Take Heed to Yourselves*, p. 127.) And he has also said: “This world is not growing better . . . wickedness is increasing.” (*Ibid.*, p. 207.)

Never has the devil been so well organized, and never in our day has he had so many powerful emissaries working for him. We must do everything in our power to strengthen and safeguard the home and family.

The adversary knows “that the home is the first and most effective place for children to learn the lessons of life:

truth, honor, virtue, self-control; the value of education, honest work, and the purpose and privilege of life. Nothing can take the place of home in rearing and teaching children, and no other success can compensate for failure in the home.” (President David O. McKay, in *Family Home Evening Manual*, 1968-69, p. iii.)

Undermining of home

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.) And let me warn the sisters in all seriousness that you who submit yourselves to an abortion or to an operation that precludes you from safely having additional healthy children are jeopardizing your exaltation and your future membership in the kingdom of God.

Responsibility of parents

Parents are directly responsible for the righteous rearing of their children, and this responsibility cannot be safely delegated to relatives, friends, neighbors, the school, the church, or the state.

“I appeal to you parents, take nothing for granted about your children,” said President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. “The great bulk of them, of course, are good, but some of us do not know when they begin to go away from the path of truth and righteousness. Be watchful every day and hour. Never relax your care, your solicitude. Rule kindly