

30/10/89
EHS

Deacon/Elder Lecture Outlines

Lecture 19

The Balanced Approach to Child Rearing

I. Introduction

- A. "The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow!" This phrase is repeated often because it is true.
- B. Does that statement comfort you? Or does it concern you and make you anxious for the future?
- C. Probably most of us fear the thought that children today are tomorrow's leaders. And well we may, for the true principles of child rearing have been ignored, if not forgotten, by many parents.
- D. As leaders in God's Church we can help mold the future by learning how to mold our children. We can then teach others the same skills according to the unique and wonderful child-rearing truths the Bible teaches.

II. SPS

This lecture will present a balanced approach to child rearing.

III. Need

It takes little thought to realize why we in God's Church need to be constantly refreshed on the principles of child rearing. Here are just a few of the reasons:

- A. Proper child rearing does not come to us automatically. It must be learned.
- B. The responsibility for rearing our children is so profound that it must not be left to chance.
- C. This world is full of misinformation. We have probably absorbed some of it unconsciously.

Therefore we need to refresh our minds on this vital subject.

IV. An Awesome Responsibility

A. Commanded of God

God says to parents, "Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). This statement emphasizes the contrast between the natural human responses to children and the actions of spirit-led Christian parents. It also shows child rearing to be an ongoing requirement of a Christian parent's growth and development -- an expression of the fruits of God's Spirit in action.

We all know Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and [even] when he is old he will not depart from it." This shows the importance of working with children when they are young. It tells us that the lifelong values a person will hold dear are inculcated at a young and tender age. This is when he or she is responsive to the leadership, example and verbal instruction of parents.

Deuteronomy 6 gives the broadest perspective of the child rearing process. Here we see God's intent for mankind's education and training through the generations. Parents were to pass on the basic knowledge of God and His purpose to their children. Added to this would be the accumulated physical, material knowledge man could discover for himself.

This chapter tells us a lot about conviction, diligence and methods of instruction. It leaves no doubt of the awesome responsibility God places on parents. We will examine it in some detail later in this lecture.

B. Your Child's Future

While all child rearing has a spiritual foundation and purpose, we must not limit our efforts to so-called "religious" education. Our children need education and training for conducting successful lives in this physical society. They must be taught to apply true spiritual principles to the problems and challenges of everyday life. They must learn the way of give. They must learn how to work. They must learn to be responsible, dependable and resourceful.

In short, they need to develop the elements of the seven laws of success.

Your children had no choice of parents. Yet their future success in life is largely dependent upon the

foundation you help them lay during their formative years. Do not neglect this grave responsibility.

C. Spiritual Growth for Parents

Child rearing is not just for children. The constant care and instruction of children give parents many years of experience in conducting a tiny portion of God's government. You see, God has delegated to parents responsibility for governing their children and bringing them into harmony with His plan. It's our job to equip our children with the basic skills they will need as God delivers to them the same responsibility when they become parents.

D. Source of Joy and Happiness

Another desirable result of proper child rearing is the joy that happy, respectful children can bring to parents. God in His love intended that we have a type of the same joy He will experience when He succeeds in "bringing many sons to glory." This joy is multiplied when our own children give us grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

As God says in Proverbs 17:6, "Children's children are the crown of old men." Most of us know grandparents whose lives revolve largely around their grandchildren.

As we read in Psalm 127:3, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is His reward." Yes, God gives us children as a blessing of life. And children bring us great joy when we have a proper relationship with them.

But God also warns that if we neglect our children they will bring shame and its attendant pain upon us (Proverbs 29:15).

E. Additional Responsibility of Your Office

You are leaders in this local church area. You have therefore, a responsibility to set a good example -- one that can be safely followed. What kind of example of child rearing are you setting?

God pinpoints this area as one of the determining factors whether a man is qualified to be ordained to any office in the Church, be it deacon or elder: "Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well" (I Timothy 3:12). And an elder, Paul writes, must have "faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination" (Titus 1:6).

* But keep in mind that this is not the primary focus of your child rearing. Do not attempt to pressure your children into conformity because of your office. The pressure is on you, as a leading Christian, to do the best possible job of child rearing for the reasons mentioned above. That you serve in an office of the Church simply adds a little weight to the importance of your example.

F. A Portion of the Work of the Church

In Malachi 4:5-6 we read: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

We understand an important meaning of that verse is to turn this generation to their biblical "fathers." But we should not neglect our long-understood emphasis to the physical family.

God's Church is doing a spiritual type of the work of Elijah. What God is saying is that unless we succeed in restoring God's government to the foundation of all society -- the home -- and unless we provide a trained nucleus of virtuous young people who will be the pioneers of the world tomorrow, there is no use in perpetuating human life on this earth. What a commission! We must not fail.

V. Goals of Child Rearing

- A. The ultimate goal of child rearing is that our children become members of the God Family. Building a relationship with them that points them to a right relationship with God begins even before birth.
- B. A secondary goal is that our children develop the necessary attitudes and skills to function successfully in human society.
- C. Thirdly, our children must learn how to perpetuate God's way of life in their own future families, not only for their own personal happiness but also to prepare godly leaders in generations to come.

VI. The Wrong Approach -- Two Extremes

A. Parents -- Trained Observers

The world has been deceived into believing that children will somehow evolve into decent, respectful citizens and members of society. Parents don't really

have to do much, which, of course, is appealing since many parents are looking for the easy way out. Parents become little more than observers.

* It is parents -- not children -- who need to be trained. Then they can understand why their children act the way they do as they pass through one stage of behavior to the next sometimes more frightening stage. To try to alter their "normal" behavioral patterns, goes the deception, would seriously hamper their development. This is the easy way out for parents who don't want to be bothered with teaching, training and disciplining their children. This approach is doomed to failure! Children, following the natural course of humanity, only grow worse -- not better.

Effective child rearing takes time -- lots of time. And it's work -- hard work. Many who know how to rear their children God's way fail because they aren't willing to pay the price of success by meeting the required daily payments in time and energy. But we need to realize that paying the price yields huge, lifelong benefits to both parents and children.

B. Parents -- Unbalanced Disciplinarians

Some members of the Church have worked diligently at spanking their children and feel that they are doing a good job of child rearing. However, such might not be the case.

* Spanking and effective child rearing are not synonymous. There is far more to child rearing than paddling your children when they are disobedient. Spanking, of itself, will not produce a respectful, obedient, balanced child.

Some parents have tried to use spanking as a quick solution to their child-rearing problems. But that doesn't work! You need to see the overall approach -- the big picture -- to make sure you are on the right track to successful child rearing.

VII. Four Keys to Effective, Balanced Child Rearing

A. Love Your Children

God is the ideal parent. He is the perfect example. God is love. His every action is an expression of that love, even the discipline He administers to His children. His motivation toward us is outgoing concern. He wants what is best for us in every situation.

God designed the human race so that children are

begotten through the intimate expression of love between husband and wife. God intended that parents continue to share their love with their children throughout their lives.

The only motivation powerful enough to produce truly effective, godly child-rearing practices is love. We must want what is ultimately best for our children. ~~That should be the force behind every communication and action between us and them.~~ Of course all of us fall short of this ideal, but it should be the standard toward which we are striving.

The opposite motive, often present in families, is that of selfishness. It is all too easy for us as parents to let selfish concerns determine the actions we take. And because we are in authority, we must constantly guard against taking advantage of our children in judgments we make. When we have conflicts with our children we need to ask whether our greatest concern is for their welfare or our own.

This certainly does not mean that parents should give in to every desire or demand of a child. Far from it. Teach your children to respect the values and rules of life embraced by the parents. But they must be able to see and feel the loving concern that motivates the parents' actions toward them.

Don't forget that Jesus said, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Authorized Version, Matthew 20:27). Fathers and mothers who bear rule over their children by God's authority must be loving servants.

Children are fantastic blessings from Almighty God. They are assets, not liabilities. And loving your children is more than just providing for their physical needs. Today, some parents are giving more and more things to their children and less and less of themselves. True love involves giving of yourself. There is no substitute.

1. Enjoy your children.

The Psalmist wrote about the "joyful mother of children" (Psalm 113:9) and noted, "Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:5). Don't look on your children as a bother or a nuisance. Many parents are trying to find some way to "get them out from under their feet" or "out of their hair."

2. Spend time with your children.

How much time do you spend each week with your children? Did you know recent surveys in the United States show parents only spend 10-15 minutes of quality time each day with their children? How much do you actually play with your children? Playing with your children will prove to be not only an enjoyable experience but also a teaching experience. You will learn a great deal about your children by playing with them. You will also find that playing is a valuable opportunity to teach them important principles.

3. Be expressive in your love to your children.

Let them know you really do love them. Tell them often how much you love them and how much they mean to you. Remember, true love is outgoing -- expressive. Our children learn the meaning of love just as we have learned what true love is.

We love God because He first loved us (I John 4:19). He set the example. He expressed love to us. We responded to His love. You must teach your children how to love by first loving them. Hug and kiss them when appropriate. It isn't wrong for a father and son to kiss -- regardless of age. The parable of the prodigal son makes this clear (Luke 15:20). Little children enjoy crawling up onto their parents' laps and being loved. The ticklings and piggyback rides all go together to build a bond of love no force can break.

4. Get to know your children.

Unfortunately, as children grow older they often pull into a shell and become virtual strangers to their parents. They claim their parents don't understand them. Many times, sad to say, this may be true. Talk to your children, but don't make the mistake of doing all the talking. Let them talk. Find out what they are thinking.

And make sure you don't talk to them only when you need to correct them. Continually keep the channels of communication open. Your patient listening to matters important to them confirms that you love them.

Be careful to talk to them on their level and be sure they understand. Be gentle and patient when they have trouble expressing themselves. And don't squelch every attempted conversation by

continually doing picky little things like correcting grammar and pronunciation.

5. Appreciate what your children do.

Children hunger for recognition and praise from their parents. They will often spend a great deal of time preparing some little gift for you. It has no monetary value, but it's their way of saying, "I love you." It will crush them if you belittle it or overlook it. When they accomplish something worthwhile like bringing home a good report card, acknowledge it. Let them know you are well pleased. God wasn't neglectful about expressing His satisfaction with His Son (Matthew 3:17).

6. Purchase gifts for your children from time to time throughout the year as you are able.

Gifts don't have to be expensive as long as they are given as a sincere expression of your love and concern.

On the other hand, don't make the mistake of giving your children so much that they become spoiled. Use wisdom and moderation. Don't give your child everything he asks for -- even if you can afford it. Teach your children this lesson of life -- they can't always have everything they want.

7. Plan family activities.

Do things together as a family. Backyard cookouts, picnics, an outing to the beach or to the mountains, camping, hunting and fishing trips -- these are the things your children will cherish in their memories the rest of their lives. Be creative and take advantage of special recreational, cultural and educational features of the local area. Get the children involved in planning family activities. Have fun together!

8. Don't force your children to grow up before their time.

Remember, they are children -- not adults. Don't rob them of their childhood by trying to force them to grow up faster than God intended. Notice Paul's statement concerning this: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man [and not before], I put away childish things" (I Corinthians 13:11).

Children will be and must be children. Of course, they are going to do childish things. What else would you expect? And no matter how much you discipline them, they will continue to be exactly what they are -- children. However, "Even a child is known by his deeds, by whether what he does is pure and right (Proverbs 20:11). Therefore, what we are striving to accomplish by the proper kind of child rearing is obedient, polite, respectful children, not some kind of "little men" or "little women."

9. Your love for your children will also be expressed in the teaching and discipline you give them.

Some time ago, Mr. Tkach asked all God's ministers to read two good books on the subject of child rearing. They were "How to Really Love Your Child" and "How to Really Love Your Teenager" by Dr. Ross Campbell. It would be good to review that material to help reinforce this DELS lecture.

B. Teach Your Children

We teach our children primarily in two ways -- by example and by specific instruction. Both methods are very important and must be used together to gain the best results. Let's consider your example first.

Actions speak louder than words. Regardless of what you say, your children will be more influenced by what you do and what you are.

Your children's educational training begins long before they enter school. Your home is their first classroom. You are their first instructors.

Children learn by mimicking or imitating others. Haven't you noticed (sometimes to your dismay) how your children gradually take on certain of your characteristics? We are at times dumbfounded at how much they are like we are. They are little carbon copies of their parents--gradually being created in our image and in our likeness.

This is the way God intended it should be. This is exactly the same way He is creating children in His image and after His likeness. We, as parents, are privileged to witness an unfolding of the physical type of what is spiritually taking place in our own lives.

Jesus Christ was the perfect example of this. He said: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also

does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does" (John 5:19-20). Jesus Christ learned from His Father. He imitated or copied His Father in everything. He was so much like His Father that He could say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

As children of God, we are learning by the same process our children are learning -- imitating. "Therefore be followers [imitators, mimics] of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1).

Small children naturally look up to and stand in awe of their parents. To them, their parents are the greatest. They idolize you and want to be exactly like you when they grow up. All of this is a childlike form of worship, for to them you are a type of God.

This should come as an awesome realization. Can you begin to grasp the heavy responsibility this places upon you as parents? Think of the irreparable damage you could inflict on your children by your wrong examples. Your example is a tremendous power -- either for good or for evil.

What kind of example are you setting for the impressionable minds of your children? What type of soil are you providing for these precious little lives to grow up in? Do you want your children to grow up to be exactly as you now are? Let's discuss a number of vital areas where your example makes a big difference.

1. Are you setting a good spiritual example for your children to follow? Do you always show complete respect for God and His laws by your faithful, consistent example of obedience? Or do you occasionally drop your spiritual guard and compromise with God's laws? Sit down and go over the various laws of God and see if your example can be safely followed by your children.
2. Do you always show respect for and uphold the office of God's ministers and the Church in general? Or do you criticize your minister or Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach, or the Church or its doctrines and policies? Don't expect your children to respect the minister or, for that matter, any figure in authority, whether he be a school teacher or the head of your nation, unless you back up the offices of those in authority.
3. Is your home a happy home -- filled with love and concern? Are you and your wife happily married,

and do you express your love for each other in such a way that your children can see it? Or is there dissension between you?

4. Dad, are you a strong, able leader of your family, setting the right kind of masculine example? Mom, are you a sweet, responsible wife with a meek and quiet spirit, setting the right feminine example?
5. What kind of personality do you have? Are you friendly, outgoing, personable, fun-loving -- with a real zest for life? Your personality will be indelibly stamped into your children's lives.

Now let's look at instruction. Beside setting the right example for your children you have the opportunity to verbally instruct them as well. In fact, such instruction is a clear command from God.

Let's return to Deuteronomy 6 and study the approach God tells us to take with our children. Notice first verses 4-6. Here God shows us that before we can instruct our children in the way that is right, we must first be committed to that way ourselves. The true values must be in our hearts and minds. Then out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. The right example will be there to reinforce the instruction. Again we see the two go hand in hand.

Many Christians sincerely but mistakenly believe that instructing children in the truth is done primarily in structured, academic family Bible studies that are often tense and boring. Certainly, regular Bible study with your children, at a level they can understand, is a valuable tool for teaching them. But poorly handled or over-used it can become a burden to young people and cause them to resent the truths you are trying to teach.

In verse 7 God reveals to Israel, and to us, the natural way to teach and reinforce the true values of God. We are told to talk of them when we sit in the house, walk by the way, lie down and rise up.

Clearly, this is not a reference to some ritualistic repetition of the commandments and statutes, but rather an exhortation to show our children the application of the laws of God in the activities we experience day by day.

Notice, this same method is recommended in Exodus 12:26: "And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord,

who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt.'"

Parents who are wholeheartedly living God's way should not scare their children away from the natural learning process by specifying subjects or time periods as Bible study, or "religious" instruction. Even when structured Bible studies are conducted, they should be made relevant to the child's affairs.

After all, the truth of God is not a religion but a way of life. Further, it is a perfect, abundant, peaceful way defined by the perfect law of liberty. The only thing that makes it appear harsh and negative to our children is the influence of Satan's world. Therefore, the example we set and the environment we create must be powerful enough to counter that influence.

When a child is born, he should enter a family that is living God's way and is therefore motivated by real love. The initial expressions of that love will begin the instruction process by developing a bond between parent and child. Long before the child can speak or comprehend words, he will be learning about such things as love, tenderness, security and authority. He will associate the parents with all of the good feelings he experiences, from satisfying his hunger to making him laugh. The first year of life is a critical time for parents to build a close relationship with a child.

Once the right foundation is laid during infancy, the child will learn very quickly. It is very important that parents maintain a high level of communication with the child.

Most of the initial talk to the child will be positive approval and comfort. But as the child exercises the five senses it will be necessary to define limits of his activities. This serves two purposes: First, it will help protect him from innocent contact with danger. Second, it will reaffirm the parents' position of loving authority. The child's perception of that loving authority will become the basis of effective teaching and learning for the next several years.

Specific instruction should progress from simple to complex as the child grows and learns. It should teach the true values in a cumulative manner. Some key ingredients will be the following:

Respect for authority
Obedience to parents

Prayer
Sharing
Honesty
Friendliness
Self-control
Cleanliness
Diligence
Punctuality
Work habits
Drive
Resourcefulness
Dependability
Study habits
Right attitude in competition
Respect for the opposite sex
Financial responsibility

As these and other values are taught within the context of a Christian family, it is understood that specific spiritual duties such as Sabbath keeping and tithing are included in categories such as respect for authority. Prayer is specifically mentioned because it provides contact with God. Every child should learn to pray early in life.



It bears repeating that the combination of clear instruction and right example is the only effective means of teaching your child true values. And because children have human nature and the world offers wrong alternatives, parents must support their teaching with a system of discipline.

C. Discipline

The term discipline, as used in this lecture, is not synonymous with punishment. Rather it is used in its broadest sense to refer to a system of training and molding of character.

Right discipline provides for encouragement and rewards as well as correction and penalties. All are necessary tools for guiding the child. God, Himself, uses the combination of blessing and cursing, reward and punishment to get His point across. That is the message of Deuteronomy 28.

In dealing with children it is necessary to work with the five senses. Proper behavior and good fruits should be met with rewards that bring children pleasure. These may include praise, hugs, toys, special privileges, money and other rewards.

Wrong behavior and bad fruits should be met with penalties that bring a measure of pain or discomfort to children. These may include voicing disapproval,

proper spanking, deprivation of privileges, withholding money and other penalties.

The point of this discipline is to help the child grasp the effects of laws in motion. Children will not always be able to understand the long-term results of wrong actions and thus fulfill the words of Ecclesiastes 8:11, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Appropriate punishment, lovingly administered by parents will help motivate a child to avoid wrong actions. By the same token, rewards and praise will motivate a child to choose the right way because he enjoys the rewards. This system is patterned after the one God uses with His children.

It is important to keep in mind the principle that where there is no law there is no sin. That is, children must not be expected to somehow discern the difference between right and wrong unless they have been instructed accordingly. Therefore, discipline, whether reward or punishment, must go hand in hand with instruction. Neither is of much benefit without the other.

If a child misbehaves in ignorance, it is not a time for discipline but a time for instruction. The instruction must be clear and definite. It should explain exactly what the child did wrong. It is helpful to have the child repeat the instruction and acknowledge that he understands it. Then the parent should guide the child not to behave the same way in the future. Subsequent actions of the child can then be rewarded or punished according to his obedience or disobedience. This approach gives the child a clear direction for his behavior and a sense of security in the loving responses of his parents.

Parents must not be deterred from necessary punishment by misguided sympathy for the child. Remember, God says in Hebrews 12:11, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Two points must be emphasized here. First, do not neglect your child by failing to provide rewards and praise when he is doing well. If you do, you will not only lose its benefits, but you may reinforce wrong behavior. That's because the child gets more attention from you when he misbehaves. Second, always follow any punishment with an expression of love and

→ affection for the child. This reminds him that you are punishing him because you love him, not because you are angry with him.

It is safe to say that the two biggest shortcomings most well-meaning parents have in child rearing are 1) lack of clarity with instruction and 2) lack of consistency with discipline. If you can overcome these two obstacles you will be well on your way to successful child rearing.

Our heavenly Father has set the perfect example of parenting. Notice what David was inspired to write: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.... As a father pities [has compassion for] his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:8, 13-14). Learn to have God's attitude in dealing with your children. This is not easy. But with help through His Spirit, you can do it.

D. Make God Your Partner

Child rearing is a fundamental spiritual responsibility of every Christian parent. It demands wisdom and character beyond human capacity alone. Only God, through His Holy Spirit can give you the strength and understanding you need to effectively rear your children. As in any spiritual endeavor, you simply can't leave God out of the picture. You must stay close to God at all times and study His Word to find the guidance you will need.

Don't forget that our children are not only ours but God's. He has a profound interest in their ultimate success. And though our young children do not have the Holy Spirit within them, they do have access to God and He is calling them to a special relationship with Him.

We should not consider our children as average carnal children who will be antagonistic to the truth. If we have been blessed with the opportunity to rear them correctly from birth, we can pray for them to respond to God's instruction. Of course they will be tried by this society and they will often fall short. After all, we who are converted do the same.

Pray for your children. Let God know that you are concerned for them and that you know they need His help at all times. Ask Him to motivate and inspire them. Ask Him to give them right attitudes and the strength to resist the natural pulls of the flesh and the temptations to go astray.

Of course you need to regularly ask God for the discernment, judgment, compassion and mercy you need to be an effective parent. The responsibility you have is a type of the spiritual office you hope to someday fulfill in the Kingdom of God. Only with the mind of God and His attitude of love can you hope to be successful as a parent.

VIII. Conclusion

It is true that "The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow." That being so, we can help change the future by applying God's principles of child rearing in the present -- now!