**Unit 5 Part 3: Parents are Held Accountable:**

**Proclamation Point #3:**

Husbands and wives-mothers and fathers-will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

**Charge to Parents:**

I must begin by testifying that the word of the Lord to parents in this Church is contained in the 68th section of the Doctrine and Covenants in this remarkable instruction: “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.” Parents are instructed to “teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.” As a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, I accept this as the word of the Lord, and as a servant of Jesus Christ, I urge parents to follow this counsel as conscientiously as they can. (Elder James E. Faust, “Dear Are the Sheep That Have Wandered,” *Ensign*, May 2003)

**Parents Cannot Leave Their Conviction in Doubt:**

Listen to a helpful warning by Elder Holland about how parents should nurture their children’s spiritual growth by the way the parents share their own testimony and discuss their own conversion in their home.

“We all learn “line upon line, precept upon precept,” with the goal being authentic religious faith informing genuine Christlike living. In this there is no place for coercion or manipulation, no place for intimidation or hypocrisy. But no child in this Church should be left with uncertainty about his or her parents’ devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Restoration of His Church, and the reality of living prophets and apostles who, now as in earlier days, lead that Church according to “the will of the Lord, … the mind of the Lord, … the word of the Lord, … and the power of God unto salvation.” …

“Parents simply cannot flirt with skepticism or cynicism, then be surprised when their children expand that flirtation into full-blown romance. If I matters of faith and belief children are at risk of being swept downstream by this intellectual current or that cultural rapid, we as their parents must be more certain than ever to hold to anchored unmistakable moorings clearly recognizable to those of our own household. It won’t help anyone if we go over the edge with them, explaining through the roar of the falls all the way down that we really did know the Church was true and that the keys of the priesthood really were lodged there but we just didn’t want to stifle anyone’s freedom to think otherwise. No, we can hardly expect the children to get to shore safely if the parents don’t seem to know where to anchor their own boat.

“We can be reasonably active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints, but if we do not live lives of gospel integrity and convey to our children powerful heartfelt convictions regarding the truthfulness of the Restoration and the divine guidance of the Church from the first Vision to this very hour, then those children may, to our regret but not surprise, turn out not to be visibly active, meeting-going Letter-day Saints or sometimes anything close to it.

“What a classic example of the warning Elder Richard L. Evans once gave.

“Said he: “sometimes some parents mistakenly feel that they can relax a little as to conduct and conformity or take perhaps a so called liberal view of basic and fundamental things-thinking that a little laxness or indulgence won’t matter-or they may fail to teach or to attend Church, or may voice critical views. Some parents … seem to feel that they can ease up a little on the fundamentals without affecting their family or their family’s future. But,” he observed, “if a parent goes a little off course, the children are likely to exceed the parent’s example.” 7 to lead a child (or anyone else!), even inadvertently, away from faithfulness, away from loyalty and bedrock belief simply because we want to be clever or independent is license no parent nor any other person has ever been given.” (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland “A Prayer for the Children,” Conference Report, April 2003)

**Good Parents Defined:**

Though the responsibility and accountability is great, the prophets have comforting counsel to Parents, who even with their best efforts should not be too discouraged when their children struggle to choose well, and others should refrain from judging parent’s efforts simply by the choices of their children. Pres. Faust explains what the true measure of good parenting is…

“Who are good parents? They are those who have lovingly, prayerfully, and earnestly tried to teach their children by example and precept “to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.” 4 [D&C 68:28.] This is true even though some of their children are disobedient or worldly. Children come into this world with their own distinct spirits and personality traits. Some children “would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. … Perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother.” [Howard W. Hunter, “Parents’ Concern for Children,” Ensign, Nov. 1983, 65] Successful parents are those who have sacrificed and struggled to do the best they can in their own family circumstances.”(President James E. Faust, “Dear Are the Sheep that Have Wandered,” General Conference, April 2003)

**If Parents Do Their Best:**

“We too must have the faith to teach our children and bid them to keep the commandments. We should not let their choices weaken our faith. Our worthiness will not be measure according to their righteousness. Lehi did not lose the blessing of feasting at the tree of life because Laman and Lemuel refused to partake of its fruit.

“Sometimes as parents we feel we have failed when our children make mistakes or stray. Parents are never failure when they do their best to love, teach, pray, and care for their children. Their faith, prayers, and efforts will be consecrated to the good of their children.” (Elder Robert D. Hales, “With All the Feeling of a Tender Parent: A Message of Hope to Families,” Conference Report, April 2004)

**Correct Children By Love:**

In light of the accountability parents will bear for raising their children in light and truth, and in love and according to law, keep in mind that coercive means and critical methods will often produce the opposite outcome than was desired. Consider President Joseph F. Smith’s invitation with a warning and followed by Sister Tanner’s insightful definition and explanation.

“Fathers, if you wish your children to be taught in the principles of the gospel, if you wish them to love the truth and understand it, if you wish them to be obedient to and united to you, love them! And prove to them that you do love them by your every word or act to them. For your own sake, for the love that should exist between you and your boys-however wayward they might be… when you speak or talk to them, do it not in anger, do it not harshly, in a condemning spirit.

“Speak to them kindly; get down and weep with them if necessary and get them to feel tenderly toward you. Use no lash and no violence… approach them with reason, with persuasion and love unfeigned…. You can’t force your boys, nor your girls into heaven. You may force them to hell, by using harsh means in the efforts to make them good, when you yourselves are not as good as you should be.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 316-17.)

**Teaching Not Criticism:**

“Finally, did I tell you … that love is the foundational virtue in building a strong home? Our Father in Heaven exemplifies the pattern we should follow. He loves us, teaches us, is patient with us, and entrusts us with our agency. President Hinckley said: “Love can make the difference-love generously given in childhood and reaching through the awkward years of youth … and encouragement that is quick to compliment and slow to criticize” (“Bring Up a Child in the Way He Should Go,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 60). Sometimes discipline, which means “to teach,” is confused with criticism. Children-as well as people of all ages-improve behavior from love and encouragement more than from fault-finding.” (Susan W. Tanner, “Did I Tell You?...” General Conference, April 2003)

**The Family is Safe:**

In conclusion, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, can be assured that everything they need to be successful, thriving, converted, and happy couples and families is provided for in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church which has been organized and led by modern-day Prophets of God.

“The family is safe with the Church. We are not in doubt as to the course we must follow. It was given in the beginning, and guidance from on high is renewed as need may be. As we continue on our course, these things will follow as night the day: The distance between the Church and a world set on a course which we cannot follow will steadily increase. Some will fall away into apostasy, break their covenants, and replace the plan of redemption with their own rules. Across the world, those who now come by the tens of thousands will inevitably come as a flood to where the family is safe. Here they will worship the Father in the name of Christ, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and know that the gospel is the great plan of happiness, of redemption, of which I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.” (President Boyd K. Packer, “The Father and the Family,” *Ensign*, May 1994)