

AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

The Sacred Duty to Raise Children in Love and Righteousness

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In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” parents are informed of a sacred duty to raise their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God, and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live.¹ We need to carefully consider and understand several concepts that will help us discharge these duties.

My father-in-law, the late Elder Merlin R. Lybbert of the Seventy, gave his last general conference talk in 1994. This talk discussed the special status of children and the need for parents and other role models to take seriously their responsibilities for children.² Twenty-five years before giving that address in general conference, Elder Lybbert’s oldest son died at age seven in an accident in a Church meetinghouse. Elder Lybbert had pondered and considered the special status of children who die young over the ensuing

years. His talk was the distillation of those thoughts. Most of the concepts I will mention here I learned from him in his general conference talk and in other conversations.

Protected Time

The Lord has provided “protected time” for children, a time during which the power to tempt them has been taken from Satan. In fact, children cannot sin until they reach the age of accountability (see D&C 18:42; D&C 29:47). During these formative, innocent years, a child may learn wrong behavior; but such is not the result of Satan’s temptations. It comes from wrong teachings and the bad example of others.

This “protected time” is to be used to metaphorically dress children in gospel armor in preparation for the battle against sin. When this preparation time is neglected, they are left vulnerable to the enemy. To permit children to enter into that period of life when they will be buffeted and tempted by the evil one, without faith in

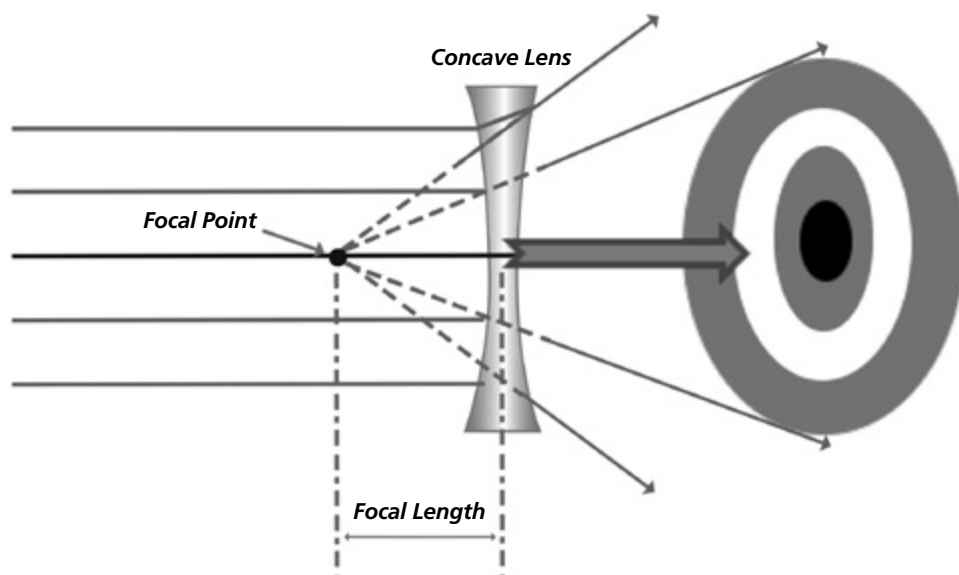


Elder Dale G. Renlund

the Lord Jesus Christ and an understanding of the basic principles of the gospel, is to set them adrift in a world of wickedness.

Parental Example

Our Heavenly Father gave parents the responsibility of properly teaching and protecting children. The responsibility is not the child’s. The late Elder Richard L. Evans (1906–1971) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “If a parent goes a little off course, the children are likely to exceed the parent’s example.”³ Stated differently, the trajectory of parents’ lives affects the trajectory of the child’s. Whatever degree of ambiguity or equivocation exists in the commitment of parents to live



the gospel is magnified in the children.

An analogy can be drawn from how rays of light are affected by a diverging or concave lens. Imagine trying to hit the center of the target, shown on the right of the figure, with a beam of light passing through the concave lens, shown on the left of the figure. As a beam of light hits anywhere but the center, the beam diverges outwardly. The only way for a beam of light to pass straight through to the target is for it to hit directly on the center of the lens.

In a similar way, if parents are a little off center in their commitment to live the gospel, it is likely that the trajectory of their children's lives will diverge even further.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "Our children take their flight into the future with our thrust and with our aim.

And even as we anxiously watch that arrow in flight and know all the evils that can deflect its course after it has left our hand, nevertheless we take courage in remembering that the most important mortal factor in determining that arrow's destination will be the stability, strength, and unwavering certainty of the holder of the bow."⁴

The Book of Mormon prophet Mormon once described those who had become less faithful to their commitment to follow the Savior. He said they were "as chaff is driven before the wind, or as a vessel is tossed about upon the waves, without sail or anchor, or without anything wherewith to steer her" (Mormon 5:18). Without wind, a sailing vessel has no power. Without anchor, she has no moorings or stability, especially during storms. Without the ability to steer, a vessel has no direction.

Parents, said Elder Holland, "must be more certain than ever

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . ."
(Matt. 18:6)

to hold to anchored, unmistakable moorings . . . [they must] live the gospel as conspicuously as [they] can."⁵

Failure is Not an Option

We need to bear in mind that we will be held accountable before God for how we discharge these obligations related to our children. Recall that the Savior said, "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" (Matthew 18:6). The Greek verb translated into English as "offend" literally means, "cause to stumble." Offenders of children, or those who cause them to stumble, face a divine wrath. We offend a child by any teaching or example which leads a little one to violate a moral law or to go astray, excites him or her to anger, creates resentment, or perhaps even leads him or her to become displeasing and disagreeable.

Some parents reason that religion and testimony are personal. In some respects they are right. Brushing teeth is also personal. Imagine how ludicrous it would be for me to determine that I would not teach my child to brush her teeth, because it is a personal decision and I do not

wish to force my will upon her. I say to myself, let her get her own experiences and make her own decisions. If I take that approach, her teeth may suffer the devastating effects that early teaching and training would have avoided for the duration of her mortal life.

Similarly, delaying the patterns to increase the likelihood of developing a personal testimony of the Savior and His work can have eternal consequences, the burden of which will be shared by the negligent parent. The Lord Himself said: “And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion . . . 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). ■

REFERENCES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.
2. See Elder Merlin R. Lybbert, “The Special Status of Children,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 31–32.
3. Elder Richard L. Evans, Conference Report, Oct. 1964, 135–136; quoted by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, see reference #4.
4. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. “A Prayer for the Children,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003, 87.
5. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. “A Prayer for the Children,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003, 86.

The Picture in the Barbershop

By Elder David Wilding and Sister Doris Wilding

Sometimes an eternal family’s introduction to the gospel begins with something very simple, like a picture of Jesus displayed in a barbershop. This was the case with Brother and Sister Kapenda, who moved to South Africa from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. Like many others, they came to South Africa looking for work opportunities and government stability.

They initially moved to Johannesburg, but later settled in Ladysmith, where Brother Kapenda worked out of a little pink wooden shack that served as his barbershop. It stood in line with a dozen or so other

barbershops along Lyell Street, the main road through busy, bustling Ladysmith. Brother Kapenda’s father had prophetically told him before he left, “When you go to South Africa, you will find the church that is right for you.” His father also promised that he would pray for him.

Brother Kapenda’s barbershop displayed a picture of Jesus that everyone passing by could see. One day, Elder Jared Hilton from Cedar Hills, Utah, and Elder Mike Hensen from Richfield, Idaho, were walking past the barbershops when they noticed the picture. They first walked on by, but they later felt impressed to go back.

Brother Kapenda’s barbershop in Ladysmith



Though he was across the street when the elders first walked by, when Brother Kapenda saw them return, he crossed the street to meet them. When he identified himself as the owner of the shop, the missionaries said they saw his picture of the Savior and wanted to tell him about the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was interested, as he was not attending any church at the time. He had visited several churches, but explained, "When I went to those churches, my heart was not there." He knew that someday he would find the right church, so he invited the elders to his home.

They met with the Kapenda family, including Sister Kapenda and their two young children, Joseph and Charlotte. After giving them a Book of Mormon,

the missionaries began teaching them the gospel. Brother Kapenda struggled with the English Book of Mormon, so the elders gave him a French edition which he read diligently.

After some initial missteps, the whole family visited The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ladysmith for the first time on Father's Day. To everyone's surprise, Brother Kapenda was called upon to pray. He accepted, praying in French to know the truthfulness of the gospel. It was his first time giving a public prayer. He had also taken the sacrament many times in other churches, but in this church, it was different. After the family returned home, even young Joseph said, "This is the church we must go to!"

The Kapenda Family sealed in Johannesburg Temple



Joseph Kapenda

Brother Kapenda agreed, stating, "All week I was blessed." As they progressed in the missionary lessons, their testimonies of the restored Church grew, and both Brother and Sister Kapenda accepted the invitation to be baptized just one month later.

The supportive Ladysmith Saints filled the room adjacent to the baptismal font. They sang hymns with their typical enthusiasm and lovely harmony, and gave talks on baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. When the beautiful couple, dressed in white, entered the baptismal waters, their smiles displayed their joy.

After his parents were baptized, young Joseph could hardly wait until he was old enough for his turn. His father had been counselled by the branch president to teach and prepare his son for baptism, and Joseph was an eager learner who asked a lot of questions. Not only did he want to be baptized, but he wanted to be a missionary when he grew up. He immediately became an enthusiastic little member missionary, talking

about the Book of Mormon and the Church to all of his neighbors and friends, and inviting them to church. Many came, which antagonized the pastors of their old congregations, who actively denounced the Church, stating, "They don't even have a cross on their church!"

Brother Kapenda learned to respond: "Though we don't wear, or have a cross on our buildings, we respect it as Christian symbol. However, we prefer to emphasize the resurrection rather than the death of the Savior."

He was soon called as a counsellor in the branch Young Men presidency, teaching the *Come, Follow Me* lessons to the Aaronic Priesthood young men. He studied and prayed about the new lesson manual, and could feel the Spirit as he learned the lessons. The family found happiness through friendships, callings, and learning more about the gospel. In December of 2012 Brother and Sister Kapenda had the opportunity to go to the Johannesburg Temple to perform baptisms for the dead.

The family received an additional blessing when Sister Kapenda gave birth to their third child, John. Brother Kapenda was a joyful man as he returned to his home in Zambia for business. He was mindful that young Joseph's eighth birthday was

coming up and his son was eager for his father to baptize him as soon as he returned.

Unfortunately, Joseph came home from school one Monday complaining of a headache. Despite rest and medication, he worsened as the week went on. He was admitted to the Ladysmith Provincial Hospital in the early hours of Friday morning, but was pronounced dead by 6:00 a.m.

The family plunged into grief. Church members surrounded them to console and sustain them. They introduced a quiet, reverent way of expressing their love. They sang hymns for hours to comfort the family and invite the Spirit. They offered assurance that little Joseph was with his Father in Heaven, the Savior, and other relatives who had passed on.

The funeral was held in the Ladysmith chapel, which was filled to capacity with members and many non-members, as well. They listened to the talks on the plan of salvation with interest. Joseph's school class came and sang farewell songs to their classmate, with tears rolling down their cheeks. The service was a wonderful tribute to a spiritual little boy who was close to his Father in Heaven. Brother Kapenda placed Joseph's treasured scriptures in the casket

with him. Joseph had been anxiously awaiting his baptismal day, but died two weeks before the date arrived.

Because the Kapendas had now been members of the Church for a year, they could go to the temple to receive their endowments and be sealed together as an eternal family, which they were very anxious to do. They drove to the Johannesburg Temple, where they spent two days. They did their own temple ordinances the first day. The second day was Joseph's big day; his father was to be baptized for him. Those who attended felt impressed that Joseph's shining spirit was present. He was confirmed at the edge of the font. Afterwards, the directing temple worker commented that he had "not often felt such a strong spirit as a baptism was being performed." Joseph Kapenda was baptized at last.

The family then had the glorious experience of being sealed together. The company waited in the sealing room as the two children, reverent and beautifully dressed all in white, were brought in. A special missionary served as proxy for Joseph, and Brother Kapenda later said he absolutely felt Joseph's presence there. An eternal family was formed, and to think it all started with a picture of the Savior displayed in a barbershop. ■

Sister Dorah Mkhabela Named to Young Women General Board

Courtesy of Sean E. R. Donnelly and LDS Newsroom



**Dorah
Mkhabela**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced nine new members of the Young Women general board, including our own Sister Dorah Mkhabela from Soweto, South Africa. Young Women boards began in 1880 with Sister Elmina Shepherd Taylor as Young Women General President. Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson, the current Young Women general president, was charged with selecting a board which would “help meet the global needs of the organization.”

Besides Sister Mkhabela, the new nine-member Young Women

general board also includes: Carmela Melero de Hooker, Lima, Peru; Leslie Pope Layton, Sandy, Utah; Denise Posse Lindberg, Draper, Utah; Janet Matthews Nelson, Brooklyn, New York; M. Lúcia Silva, São Paulo, Brazil; Susan Saxton Taggart, Salt Lake City, Utah; Rosemary Thackeray, Orem, Utah; and Megumi Yamaguchi, Nagoya, Japan.

Just one week before her calling, Sister Mkhabela states, “I had the impression I was going to be speaking to an Apostle.” She tried to dismiss the thought, as she had already met Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles when he was in South Africa. “But it kept on coming. Then on Monday, the 26th of January, I was informed that I was going to speak to Elder Holland.”

A video conference with Sister Mkhabela, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland and President Boyd K Packer of

the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Sister Carol McConkie, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency; Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson, and President Renlund took place on Thursday, 30 January. Sister Mkhabela was “not expecting anything like this,” and though she found it “overwhelming,” she accepted the call with faith: “I feel like Enoch, quite inadequate, but I do also know the Lord is always there for me.”

She need not feel inadequate, but rather uniquely qualified to serve. At the time of her call, Sister Mkhabela was serving as a Sunday School teacher, having served previously as a counsellor in Relief Society and Primary presidencies and as a teacher in seminary, Relief Society, Primary, and nursery.

With a diploma in education, Sister Mkhabela has also taught high school for 13 years while raising her children, two daughters and a son. She can speak seven languages, which enables her to reach out to many. As a convert herself, she can relate to the new sisters who are joining the Church. She says that as first-generation members, she and her husband have learned the gospel “slowly every day” and that they “continue to learn.”

“For now my hope is to help the board understand more the circumstances and needs of young women in Africa,” she explains. “My calling is exciting, yet overwhelming because of the responsibility that comes with it. I view my calling as an opportunity to grow and, on the other hand, provide insights that will help the Young Women program in our area.”

Sister Neill F. Marriot, second counsellor in the Young Women general presidency, explains that women on the general board visit with members in their areas, “not travelling very far, just within a 100-mile (161 km) radius of their homes, to visit the units and just observe how the classes are doing [and] the faith of the girls. They are simply

there to support local leaders and to gain information. In the beginning, we will have a video conference with all our board once a month. They will join us from their home computers. We will connect all at once, so we will all be in the boardroom together!”

Togetherness also unites Sister Mkhabela with her youngest daughter Nyikiwe, who just turned 12; they both joined Young Women in the same month. “I am so grateful for this blessing,” Sister Mkhabela says. “It’s going to be fun for both of us to learn together.” Nyikiwe enjoys “being in Young Women with so many friendly girls” and is looking forward to sharing Young Women with her mother as well.

Sister Mkhabela concludes, “The feeling of sisterhood is the same whether you’re in Salt Lake or South Africa. I feel that we are the same before our Heavenly Father. We can teach one another.” ■

Missionary Training Centre Welcomes President and Sister Collins

By Sister Midge W. Nielsen

President Philip L. Collins and his wife, Sister Tricia Larson Collins began their duties at the South Africa Area Missionary Training Centre, replacing President Kenneth and Sister Janet Reber, who completed their two-year service and returned home mid-January.

President and Sister Collins both appear youthful and energetic, yet they come with a rich background of experience and service. They were both raised in Safford, Arizona, USA, becoming friends

and then sweethearts in high school. When Philip Collins received his first mission call to serve in the Philippines, Tricia Larson supported him in his call, wrote to him frequently, and waited for him faithfully while he served.

President Collins remembers that mission very well: “I loved the Philippines, loved the food, and loved the way it changed my life.” He emphasized that his mission actually changed him into a different being. From that time forward he could say, “The Church is true. I know it with every fiber of my soul.”

The couple good-naturedly corrects the report that they married just three weeks after his mission return: “It was actually three *and a half* weeks!” They both attended Brigham Young University where President Collins received a degree in accounting. They had three children by the time he graduated and began working for PricewaterhouseCooper in Phoenix, Arizona.

Their family grew to six: two sons and four daughters, while they lived in Mesa, Arizona. President Collins worked for Pimalco, an aluminum extrusion company, as the chief financial officer. Pimalco was acquired by ALCOA and that was when their worldwide adventure began. With their two youngest children in tow, they moved to Massena, New York, which is far north near the Canadian border. As a matter of fact, while living in New York, President Collins was called as stake president of the Montreal Mount Royal Stake.

While working for ALCOA, the Collinses, along with their youngest daughter, moved to Budapest, Hungary, where President Collins was responsible for operations in Hungary and the Netherlands. Their almost-seven-year stay in Hungary also included eight months of President Collins working in Russia. He also had the blessing of serving in the Budapest Mission presidency with two different mission presidencies. He decided to retire,

and the family moved from Budapest back to their home in Mesa, Arizona.

They stayed retired for “almost a year,” but then the energetic couple turned in their papers to serve as senior missionaries. When the interviewing bishop asked Sister Collins to think of four places she would enjoy serving, she mentioned “some warm locations: Tahiti, Tonga, Kenya, and Hawaii.” Elder Collins was called to serve as mission president in the Russia Moscow Mission. Not in any way “warm,” it included the countries of Belarus and Kazakhstan. It was a mission that included four time zones. They humbly accepted the call. As President Collins put it, “It’s amazing what you’ll do for the Lord that you wouldn’t do for an employer!” During their three-year service in Moscow, they added seven grandchildren to their growing family.

Sister Collins remembers that their service in the Moscow mission began the “start of a love affair with missionaries.” Along with the young missionaries, they treasured the seniors. Though not many senior couples served in the Moscow mission, Sister Collins valued “their wisdom and experience, their energy and willingness to serve. They made a huge difference!”

President and Sister Collins served for three years and then returned home, assuming that their “mission-serving phase” was over. However, they heard President Monson’s plea for senior couples and couldn’t resist. They heeded the call, and served as Perpetual Education Fund missionaries in Bogotá, Columbia for one year. At that time they were transferred to Ghana and “fell in love with the African people.” They emphasize, “African people know what matters most; and it isn’t material things.” The testimonies of African people impressed them and their prayers touched them. President Collins says, “When they pray, they talk to God like you’re *supposed* to talk to God.” It was while they were serving in Accra, Ghana, they were



called to serve at the Missionary Training Centre in Johannesburg.

The Africa Southeast Area MTC is the smallest of the fifteen MTCs in the world. President and Sister Collins have only twelve days to influence these young people, yet their message is clear and forceful: “The Lord loves *all* of His children. Our purpose is to invite others to come unto Him. Trust in the Lord. He knows and trusts in us to serve as he would have us do.”

When asked what kind of help or supplies they could use at the MTC, they said they are still gratefully accepting donations of clothing, as there are many missionaries in need. Sunday suits for “shorter, slender elders” are welcome, as are sports clothes for both young men and women to run and play in during their exercise periods. Missionaries are also expected to write in their journals daily, but the only journals provided just have cardboard covers. “Real journals would be a treasure,” Sister Collins says. Both she and President Collins are treasures themselves. ■

**President
Philip L. Collins
and Sister
Tricia L. Collins**