

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: BRING UP YOUR CHILDREN IN LIGHT AND TRUTH

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 68:4

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 hands when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents; for this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion ... and their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands; and they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

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I have commanded you to bring up your children in  
light and truth. (Doctrine and Covenants 90:6)

In the sight of God, and under the laws of state and nation, parents are responsible for their children. They are the natural teachers, providers, protectors, guardians, and examples of their children. It is their responsibility to provide their children with food, with clothing, with shelter, with education, with protection, with medical care, and with every possible facility for growth and nurture. Parents are responsible in law for the acts of their children, if those acts injure others or damage their property. Parents are responsible for the training, education, example, and environment which will make their children into good citizens and mature adults ready to take their place in a complex world.

Parents have not fulfilled all their obligations, however, if they provide only for the physical and mental needs of their children. They have a higher responsibility. They are also responsible for supplying their children's spiritual needs. They are responsible for so guiding and teaching them in their early, formative years, that they will later be competent to choose the things which will fit them for eternity and for life in God's kingdom.

In these days of parental neglect and juvenile delinquency, not all parents bother even to protect their children from the obvious physical dangers of life. Nevertheless, it is still the parent's legal and moral obligation to protect his

child from disease, from contagion and infection, from accident, and from the dangers of traffic, fire, water, sharp instruments, dangerous machinery, and firearms. When dealing with these hazards, ignorance is dangerous. It is the responsibility of the parent to see that the child is educated, trained, and assisted -- as well as protected -- so that in due time he will be able to guard against these hazards himself as he gains experience, wisdom, and prudence.

Similarly it is dangerous for children to remain in the moral ignorance of innocence. Children do not inherently or instinctively know all the implications of right and wrong. We say that a child is morally innocent. He does many wrong things because he does not know any better; but he is not accountable for his wrong actions. We deal with juveniles under a set of special laws which take into account their relative lack of adult responsibility. If a child playing cowboy points a gun, pulls the trigger, and kills his playmate, we don't hang him for murder, because he did it in the innocence of ignorance.

We say that an infant is innocent of wrong doing. He is not guilty of sin; he is not accountable because he does not know. Innocence is not always the absence of any overt act that is wrong or sinful. It is absence of guilt or blame or liability for wrong acts. To say that a child is innocent does not imply that he never does wrong. A child may tell fan-

tasy for truth, because he is unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality--but that does not make him a liar. He may take what does not belong to him, because he is too young to recognize the adult concepts of property rights, but that does not make him a thief. He may lose his temper because that is the natural, human thing for a descendant of Adam to do. He may be selfish, and sometimes thoughtlessly cruel, for the same reason. But he is innocent before God because of his ignorance. He does not need punishment, but careful, prayerful guidance, education, and training.

In the adult who has had opportunity to know better, however, sin is more than ignorance. It is disobedience; it is rebellion; it is deliberately viewing life with a false perspective. It is a forsaking of light and truth. When we disobey God after having received light and truth, we turn our backs on God and on that light and truth, and walk thenceforth in the darkness of our own shadow. Our rebellion places us in darkness; darkness brings more ignorance, and ignorance more darkness. But in the adult who knew better than to turn from light and truth in the first place, this darkness of ignorance is his own fault, and therefore he is guilty of sin. Light and truth forsake that evil one; but Satan tempts us always to disobey that he may plunge us into the darkness of error of sin.

"Bring up your children in light and truth." The primary responsibility for teaching children lies not with the state, and not with the church -- though each of these has a responsibility. The primary responsibility lies with the parents. Particularly is this true in the field of moral, spiritual, and religious training. Many parents argue that what the child believes in the field of religion and morals is none of their business, but something for the child to decide for himself when he grows up. We don't wait until a child is 21 years old, and then let him decide whether he should learn to read and write. We don't allow a child to decide for himself what kind of table manners to use, or what kind of behavior is acceptable in polite society. Where is the logic in the idea of waiting until he grows up to decide for himself what he shall learn about religion, morality, or spirituality? We don't let him make up his own mind as to the advisability of learning something about Alexander the

Great, Julius Caesar, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and other great figures of history. Why should we leave it to him to decide whether he needs to know anything about God, and his Son, Jesus Christ, and about the plan of redemption laid down for men? Why should we compel a child to learn how to talk to other people with correct English, and do nothing about teaching him to talk with God in prayer? If he does not know these things of spirituality, religion, and morality before he is 21, he probably never will know them. If he does not know them by the time he reaches the age of accountability, when he is old enough to know something of right from wrong for himself, at least a major part of the responsibility for his sins and mistakes is on the heads of his parents, who failed in their teaching duties.

This church is charged in modern revelation to "bring up your children in light and truth." A child could learn by personal research, by trial and error, by experience, perhaps, all the lessons of history, science, mathematics, language, and philosophy, but only with much pain and suffering and loss of time for himself and many others. Fortunately, each generation can build on the foundation laid by all previous generations. Each child can learn from the accumulated wisdom of the race. Each child can be taught by educators and teachers who have devised a curriculum of things necessary for him to know, and from parents who have walked the way before.

Similarly, we could let the child learn ethics and morals and religion by the wasteful, costly, and endless process of trial and error. But why should we? The accumulated experience of the race should be taught. The primary responsibility for such teaching is upon the heads of the parents. Certainly the child must some day decide for himself, but he needs to be taught during his formative years in such a way that eventually he will know how to decide. If he is not so taught, his sins are upon the head of his parents.

Bring up your children in light and truth. Teach them to have faith in God, to understand the need for repentance and baptism. Teach them the significance of Christ's redemption and atonement. Teach them to walk uprightly before the Lord. Only thus can your full parental responsibility be discharged.