

obedient to the first and great commandment of love.

No disputations, contention, or hatred

Following His Resurrection in Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to the Nephites in the Americas. After teaching about baptism, He warned against anger and contention, saying:

“And there shall be no disputations among you. . . . For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:22, 29).

Brothers and sisters, if we are obedient to the commandment of love, there will be no disputations, contention, or hatred between or among us. We will not speak ill of one another but will treat each other with kindness and respect, realizing that each of us is a child of God. There will be no Nephites, Lamanites, or other “-ites” among us, and every man, woman, and child will deal justly one with another.

Continue to give and love

Early one morning in Bucharest, as I jogged through Cismigiu Park, I observed an old tree which was struggling to give new branches—to give new life. The symbol of life is to give. We give so much to family and friends and to community and Church that at times we, as the old tree, may think that life is too difficult—that constantly giving is a burden too heavy to bear. We may think that it would be eas-

ier to give up and to do only that which the natural man does. But we should not and will not quit. Why? Because we must continue to give, just like Christ and the old tree gave. As we give just a little bit, let us think of Him who gave His life that we might live.

Jesus, near the end of His mortal life, revisited the doctrine of love when He instructed His adherents that as He had loved them, so they also should love one another. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

I conclude that, given the purpose of our existence, if we do not love God and neighbor, whatever else we do will be of little eternal consequence.

I testify of the divinity of Christ and the reality of His mission to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. That we might love as He loved and continues to love, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

The choir and congregation will now sing “Let Us All Press On.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Wayne S. Peterson and H. Ross Workman of the Seventy will address us. We shall then be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang “Let Us All Press On.”

Elder Wayne S. Peterson

A friendly response to childish behavior

Many years ago while on vacation with my family, I had an experience that

taught me a great lesson. On a Saturday my wife and I decided to take the children for a drive and to do some shopping. During the drive the children fell asleep, and

not wanting to wake them, I volunteered to stay in the car while my wife ran into the store.

While waiting, I glanced at the car parked in front of me. It was full of children, and they were looking at me. My eyes caught the eyes of a small boy, six or seven years old. As our eyes met, he immediately stuck his tongue out at me.

My first reaction was to stick my tongue out at him. I thought, "What have I done to deserve this?" Fortunately, before I reacted I remembered a principle taught in general conference the week before by Elder Marvin J. Ashton (see Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 36–38; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 59–60). He taught how important it was to act instead of react to the events around us. So I waved at the little boy. He stuck his tongue out at me again. I smiled and waved again. This time he waved back.

Soon he was joined in his enthusiastic waving by a little brother and sister. I responded by waving this way and that until my arm became tired. Then I rested it on the steering wheel and continued with every creative wave I could muster, all the time hoping their parents would quickly return or that my wife would soon come back.

The parents finally did come, and as they pulled away, my newfound friends continued to wave for as long as I could see them.

That was a simple experience, but it demonstrated that in most encounters we can *determine* the kind of experience we are going to have by how we respond. I was grateful that I chose to act in a friendly way rather than react to my young friend's childish behavior. In doing so I avoided the negative feelings I would have felt had I followed my natural instinct.

Living the Golden Rule can be difficult

In His instructions to the Nephites, the Savior taught, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do

to you, do ye even so to them" (3 Nephi 14:12).

Imagine the effect it would have in the world if everyone practiced this Golden Rule. But to do so seems contrary to human nature. King Benjamin declared that "the natural man is an enemy to God," and will remain such until he "yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man" and learns to be "submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love" (Mosiah 3:19).

In today's fast-paced world there seems to be a greater tendency for people to act aggressively toward each other. Some are quick to take offense and respond angrily to real or imagined affronts. We've all experienced or heard reports of road rage or other examples of rude, insensitive behavior.

Unfortunately, some of this spills over into our homes, creating friction and tension among family members.

We are free to choose our response

It may seem natural to react to a situation by giving back what is given to us. But it doesn't have to be that way. Reflecting on his horrendous wartime experiences, Viktor Frankl recalled: "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (*Man's Search for Meaning*, rev. ed. [1984], 86; italics added).

That is noble behavior and a high expectation, but Jesus expects no less of us. "Love your enemies," He said, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

A favorite hymn reinforces this teaching:

School thy feelings, O my brother;
Train thy warm, impulsive soul.
Do not its emotions smother,
But let wisdom's voice control.
["School Thy Feelings," *Hymns*,
no. 336]

The decisions we make and the way we behave are what ultimately shape our character. Charles A. Hall aptly described that process in these lines: "We sow our thoughts, and we reap our actions; we sow our actions, and we reap our habits; we sow our habits, and we reap our characters; we sow our characters, and we reap our destiny" (quoted in Burton Stevenson, sel., *The Home Book of Quotations* [1934], 845).

Be kind and loving at home

It is in the home that our behavior is most significant. It is the place where our actions have the greatest impact, for good or for ill. Sometimes we are so much "at home" that we no longer guard our words. We forget simple civility. If we are not on guard, we can fall into the habit of criticizing one another, losing our tempers, or behaving selfishly. Because they love us, our spouses and children may be quick to forgive, but they often carry away in silence unseen injuries and unspoken heartache.

There are too many homes where children fear their parents or where wives fear their husbands. Our leaders have reminded us that "fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness," and warned "that individuals who . . . abuse spouse or offspring . . . will one day stand accountable before God" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). The adversary knows that if he can foster an atmosphere of contention, conflict, and fear in the home, the Spirit is grieved and the cords that ought to bind the family are weakened.

The resurrected Lord Himself declared, "For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another" (3 Nephi 11:29).

When we feel anger or contention in our homes, we should immediately recognize what power has taken control of our lives and what Satan is endeavoring to accomplish. Solomon provided us this wise formula: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

Our home should ideally be a refuge where each member feels safe, secure, loved, and insulated from harsh criticism and contention that we so often encounter in the world.

Return good for evil, as Jesus did

Christ set a perfect example of maintaining emotional control in every setting. Appearing before Caiaphas and Pilate, He was buffeted, slapped, spat upon, and mocked by His tormentors (see Matthew 26; Luke 23). The great irony was that they demeaned their Creator, whose suffering was undertaken out of love for them.

In the face of this unjust abuse, Jesus maintained His composure, refusing to act unkindly. Even on the cross, in the midst of that unspeakable agony, His plea was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

He expects the same of us. To those who would follow Him, He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

May we evidence our discipleship by strengthening our homes in kind and loving ways. May we remember that "a soft answer turneth away wrath" and strive through our relationships and encounters to shape a character that will meet with the Savior's approval.

Jesus Christ is the perfect example. He is our Savior and our Redeemer. I tes-

tify of Him! We are led by a living prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder H. Ross Workman

Murmuring—a tool of the adversary

As young missionaries, my companion and I testified that God speaks through prophets today. One man asked, “So what did your prophet say this week?” Struggling to remember the prophet’s message in the most recent *Improvement Era*, the relevant Church magazine at the time, I came to a special understanding of the importance of knowing and obeying the teachings of the living prophet.

Today I hope to persuade you to follow the living prophets and to warn of a deception the adversary has devised to prevent you from following them. The scriptures refer to that deception as “murmuring.”

Parable shows three steps of murmuring

The Savior taught a parable to warn us of the treacherous path to disobedience through “murmuring.” In the parable, we learn of a nobleman who had a choice spot of land. He told his servants to plant 12 olive trees and build a tower overlooking the olive grove. The purpose for the tower was to permit a watchman perched upon the tower to warn of the coming of the enemy. Thus, the olive grove could be protected.

The servants did not build the tower. The enemy came and broke down the olive trees. The disobedience of the servants left a catastrophe in the olive grove. (See D&C 101:43–62.)

Why did the servants fail to build the tower? The seeds of the disaster were planted by murmuring.

According to the Lord’s parable, murmuring consists of three steps, each lead-

ing to the next in a descending path to disobedience.

First, the servants began to question. They felt to exercise their own judgment upon the instruction given by their master. “What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace?” they said (D&C 101:48). They questioned first in their own minds and then planted questions in the minds of others. Questioning came first.

Second, they began to rationalize and excuse themselves from doing what they had been instructed to do. They said: “Might not this money be given to the ex-changers? For there is no need of these things” (D&C 101:49). Thus, they made an excuse for disobedience.

The third step inevitably follows: slothfulness in following the commandment of the Master. The parable says, “They became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord” (D&C 101:50). Thus, the stage was set for disaster.

God has blessed His children with prophets to instruct them in His ways and prepare them for eternal life. The ways of God are not easily understood by man. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). Obedience is essential to realize the blessings of the Lord, even if the purpose of the commandment is not understood.

Murmuring of the children of Israel

The adversary whispers the deceptive invitation to murmur to thus destroy the power that comes from obedience. The pattern of murmuring can be seen clearly