

***Building Our Fences of Protection***  
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The importance of choosing to live a virtuous life is essential in our effort to fulfill our divine mission here upon the earth. Our virtuous choices enable us to be worthy of the guidance of the Holy Ghost. As we practice virtue and holiness, we become worthy to enter the temple of the Lord and receive saving ordinances and make sacred covenants. We have come to this earth individually, but we are all part of a family. We have the opportunity to learn and apply the teachings of our Savior Jesus Christ in our homes and families. But in order to teach our children the gospel of Jesus Christ and practice His divine teachings, our homes must be virtuous and pure. They must be a sacred and holy place as described in the Bible Dictionary<sup>1</sup>.

Elder Quentin L. Cook, in his October 2009 General Conference address, provided a beautiful metaphoric illustration which I offer as a comparison to the care we must take in order to protect our homes.

As a young boy, Elder Cook would visit his grandparents' ranch. The small ranch house had no running water, but relied upon the fresh water from the nearby spring for drinking, cooking, bathing and washing the clothes. His grandfather felt it a sacred duty to protect the spring from becoming polluted.

The cattle on the ranch would continually press against the fence with their great weight. They wanted access to the fresh water. This constant testing of the strength of the barrier meant that Elder Cook's grandfather needed to be watchful. He would faithfully tend, strengthen and repair the fence.

Years passed and physical limitations made it impossible for him to do all of the work necessary to maintain his beloved ranch and home. He trustingly gave this responsibility to others.

In young adulthood, Elder Cook took his grandfather back to see the property he had protected and loved for so many years. By this time he was in his early 90s. His grandfather was saddened

and disappointed when he saw that the fence that protected the spring was no longer secure and animals had polluted the pure spring water.

Because of his grandfather's reaction to the polluted spring, improvements and protections were undertaken which returned the spring to its original beauty and purity.

We, too, must protect our pure, life-giving homes. We must build our fence of protection. In fact, because our families are so important to us, we may choose to erect multiple fences built with varied materials. I would like to suggest three protective fences:

- The fence of Obedience
- The fence of Family Prayer and Scripture Study
- The fence of Love

## **Fence of Obedience**

First, the fence of obedience: there is great protection which comes when we choose to be obedient to the Lord's commandments and standards.

In our last general conference, several speakers, including our Prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, made reference to the importance of living the standards found in *For the Strength of Youth*. Living these standards and understanding the underlying doctrines behind each will bless and protect all of us, no matter our age.

For a moment, I'd like to talk about just one standard, "Entertainment and the Media." In the booklet, we read "Have the courage to walk out of a movie...if what is being presented does not meet Heavenly Father's standards."

A thirty-year-old friend, I'll call 'Amy,' shared an experience with me. She had gone to a movie with a few of her young mother, Church friends. She knew nothing of the movie except that the movie was new and it didn't have an "R" rating. As the movie progressed, she was uncomfortable. She recognized that the movie contained material that was contrary to the teachings found in *For the Strength of Youth*. It was also contrary to her own personal moral code. She knew she needed to have the courage to walk out of the darkened theater. This was an uncomfortable moment for Amy (especially as this was a celebration for *her* birthday), but she was obedient to the standards she knew. She was also obedient to the prompting she had received from the Holy Ghost to act.

Amy shared: "When I walked out of that movie, I felt alone. I thought my friends would follow my lead. They did not. I thought to myself, 'I'm thirty years old. I've been married in the temple, I have three children. Yet, it took all of my courage to walk away from my friends.'" She continued by stating, "Even with my experience and maturity, that was a difficult moment for me. How do teenagers, who are continually faced with similar conflicts, do it?"

We all “do it” by choosing to be obedient to the Lord’s standards. We love the Lord and want to keep His commandments. We practice virtue and holiness by choosing the right.

On that evening Amy strengthened her fence of obedience as a means of protection both for herself and her family.

## **Fence of Family Prayer and Scripture Study**

Second, building our protective fence of family prayer and scripture study cannot be understated. When Jesus visited the Nephites, He taught them to gather together and pray. In 3 Nephi 18:21, we read: “Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.”

Several weeks ago, Kate Pingree, a fourteen-year-old young woman, bore her testimony of the value of family prayer and scripture study in our sacrament meeting. She was one of the youth speakers. Prior to her talk, she had asked her siblings how they felt about this daily practice.

Laura (18) said, “I feel like I can get through the day and have the Spirit with me.”

Mary (16): “Even though it is hard to wake up and get to school on time, it puts me in a better mood and I have a better attitude for the day.”

Jacob (11): “I learn more about the church.”

Joseph (9): “I feel awesome!”

Kate continues, “In addition to family prayer and scriptures, we recite a family standard each morning. Reciting this standard reminds us of the type of people we need to be. In unison, we say:

‘We are devoted disciples of Jesus Christ. Our family’s greatest goal is to gain peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. To this end, we will . . .

Honor and obey God.

Love and serve family, friends and neighbors.

Be honest in all things.

Work hard and do our best.

Be grateful and be of good cheer!’”

At the end of this family declaration, Kate’s little brothers always add (Mom admits, shout), and “Kick Satan out of the door.”

The Pingree family has erected their protective fence of Family Prayer and Scripture Study.

## **Fence of Love**

Finally, ensure that the fence of love is in place. Natalie is a young woman who has lived in Utah, Oklahoma, Texas, England and Louisiana. Natalie's family may have lived in multiple locations and houses, but the power of love is very real in their family and its presence is felt in every "home" they establish.

There was a time when Natalie was trying to become accepted and make friends in another new school. At lunchtime, each day, she would sit with a new group of girls. It wouldn't take long until the conversations became filled with details which were anything but virtuous. When Natalie shared her beliefs, they were belittled. Her twin brother attended the same school, but did she have to sit with him? One day, Natalie was returning home on the school bus and she felt rejected and alone.

Natalie is not the only girl who has been in this situation. Our children can become discouraged and can lose hope. In this weakened state, they can fall victim to the temptations of Satan. We must be aware of our children's many situations and moods. As mothers, we are healers in our homes and one of the greatest healing powers we have at our disposal is the power of love. Do our children feel of our love? I think of the reality found in Hebrews 12:12-13, "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

While Natalie was feeling discouraged sitting in her seat on the school bus, an answer or a feeling came over her. She felt within her the comforting instructions, "Soon, you will be home. You'll walk up the sidewalk to your house, open the door and you can talk to your mother. She loves you. You will be all right. Soon, you will be home." Natalie was blessed, and even healed, because the fence of love had been built around her home. Truly, "There is beauty [safety and healing] all around When there's love at home."<sup>2</sup>

It is my sincere hope, Sisters, that we are mindful of the large beasts of temptation and sin which continually press upon those most dear to us each and every day. We must build our fences of protection, even the fences of Obedience, Family Prayer and Scripture Study, and Love. In this way we will be able to protect our homes. Our homes will be sacred and holy. Our homes will be as the spring Elder Cook has remembered for so many years, pure and life-giving. This is my testimony and prayer and I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Bible Dictionary, "Temple," 781

<sup>2</sup> Hymns, "Love at Home," 294