

“Protecting Our Children with a Testimony of  
Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ”  
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Recently I was reading the words to our beautiful Primary song, “I Feel My Savior’s Love” (*Children’s Songbook*, 74–75), and I was struck with the great need our children of today have to feel this love in their own personal lives.

This is a time of intense struggle between the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil. Our children are prime targets because of their innocence and their goodness. Satan desires to have them because of their great potential in the kingdom, and he will stop at nothing to win them. His attacks, which have always been part of society, are even entering our homes through television, printed material, and the Internet. He is attempting to influence children at an ever younger age. We must actively enter into the battle to defend ourselves, our families, and the children in the Primary. There is so much that we can do, and we are instructed how to do it in the scriptures. First, we must prepare ourselves with great commitment and personal righteousness. In D&C 27:15–18 we read:

Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.

Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you.

Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up.

Then, as this scripture continues to say, we must be determined to bring the children to this same place of safety, “that where I am ye shall be also.”

All of the things spoken of in this scripture are centered in Jesus Christ—His truth, His gospel, His angels, faith in Him, His salvation, His Spirit, His word. All of these images represent a testimony of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Our greatest defense against Satan is a testimony of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. When this is firmly and securely in place, we have access to all of the protections they offer. We then can find great assurance in the words in D&C 68:5–6:

Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants.

Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come.

Now, once we are prepared and strengthened, how can we strengthen the children through Jesus Christ? How can we do this in Primary? How can we help them put on the whole armor of God so that they might be able to withstand the evil day? They need all of the things mentioned in the above scripture just as we do. Again I say their best, their ultimate defense is a testimony of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. So let’s talk a little bit about Primary and how it can help us help the children gain that testimony.

First, may I ask the question, “What are the basics of Primary?” What are the principles upon which it is based and that should never change? The first principle is that the children need to feel love— love Heavenly Father and love from their leaders. The second principle is that the children need to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and gain a testimony of the Savior. As the children are taught the gospel, they can prepare to make and keep covenants. The third principle is that the children need to feel the Spirit. These three things are essential in order for Primary to accomplish its purpose, which is that “all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children” (3 Nephi 22:13).

Everything else in Primary could be considered elements to be used to help us accomplish the basics. What are these elements? They are the scriptures, music, testimony, and prayer.

Scriptures are an important element we use in Primary. They can be used in many ways. We can take the children directly into them during sharing time, during lessons, and when working on Faith in God. Have the children open their own scriptures, find verses, mark them, apply them, learn them, and love them. The scriptures are the words of the Lord. They bring the Spirit. They witness of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Realizing this helps us know what our objective is as we teach children directly from the scriptures. It is to help them build their individual testimonies of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. As I stated before, it is this testimony and this testimony alone that can really protect them from the influences of Satan in the world. As you teach children from the scriptures, direct them to what Jesus is asking them to do, to what He is testifying of, and to how they feel as they read them, and then always bear your own testimony.

Music carries a powerful spirit. I think it is another powerful element we have to use in Primary. It touches the children's hearts as it teaches gospel truths and provides comfort in time of need. They carry the songs of the Primary with them forever. Help the children learn the words and understand the messages as they learn these beautiful songs. They can actually sing their testimonies.

Our own testimonies can be used to strengthen our teaching in sharing time, during lessons, and when working on Faith in God. We bear our testimonies to the children, and they bear theirs to us and to one another as they participate in the learning experiences at Primary. The bearing of testimonies brings the Spirit into our teaching.

Prayer is the last element of Primary that we have mentioned. Teaching children how to pray gives them a connection to heaven. It strengthens everything else we do. It strengthens the children.

The basic principles of love, gospel knowledge and testimony, and feeling the Spirit, upon which Primary is based, are essential. They need to happen in order for Primary to be Primary. The elements we use to accomplish the basics are important to use in all Primaries. But the application of the Primary programs may look different in various locations in the Church. They may be used a little differently from one place to another, according to the needs of the children and the direction of the Spirit.

Let me give you an example. I joined a sacrament presentation of a Primary in a small branch in Alaska. I joined them over the telephone because that was the way they were holding the meeting. Each family who was located in a remote area accessible only by small airplanes would link into the phone line and report themselves present. The branch president began the meeting, and then the Primary began their presentation. The children had each received their parts and had been practicing the songs at home. Using the speakerphones, they took turns saying their parts and then sang the songs together. It was very different from the sacrament presentations I have seen other Primaries present, but it was wonderful. The children were being loved by their parents and by their leaders. They could feel the love from the Savior. They were being taught the gospel, and their testimonies were increased as they shared what they had learned with one another. There was a powerful spirit felt by everyone who participated in the meeting. I was able to speak to them briefly and testify to them that even though they were separated by so many miles, the things they felt were from the Spirit. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ knew them and loved them.

Even though this Primary sacrament meeting presentation was unusual, it was wonderful because all of the basic principles of Primary were firmly in place, and all of the elements were used.

Primaries may look different as priesthood leaders and Primary leaders work together to adapt the Primary programs to meet the needs of the children. For instance, there are Primaries that only have two classes—the older children ages 8–12 and the younger children ages 3–7. There are Primaries that have sharing time with all ages together. There are Primaries where the Faith in God program has to be done in the home with the parents because it is too difficult or dangerous for the children to gather during the week. All of this is acceptable as long as the principles of Primary are followed, as long as the children feel love and grow in gospel knowledge and testimony, and as long as they are feeling the Spirit.

Please understand the spirit in which I share these ideas. They are not to be used as an excuse to do things your way, or a reason to do less. They are to let you know that the Lord has given us a wonderful Primary program to be used to bless the lives of our children. As the Church grows across the world, needs are going to vary; situations will be different. If we understand the basic principles upon which Primary is based, we will be able, with the help of the Spirit, to use Primary effectively to protect and strengthen our

children. Our children will grow in strength and testimony. They will be able to sing from their hearts the words of “I Feel My Savior’s Love”:

He knows I will follow him,  
Give all my life to him.  
I feel my Savior’s love  
The love he freely gives me.

Thank you for all you are doing to bless and strengthen the children. Thank you for your strong testimonies and the spirit you carry with you as you teach and testify to them of the truthfulness of the gospel and of the reality of our Father in Heaven and our Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you for loving them.

May I bear my testimony that I know that God lives; He knows and loves us. He trusts us to fulfill our responsibilities as we serve Him. I pray that you will be blessed and guided in this service, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.