

# Increasing Reverence in Primary

Excerpts taken from "Respect and Reverence" Margaret S. Lifferth, First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency, April 2009 General Conference

**Achieving Reverence:** Respect for others and reverence for God are close cousins. They are rooted in humility and love. President David O. McKay said that "reverence is profound respect mingled with love," and Elder L. Tom Perry taught that "reverence flows from our admiration and respect for Deity."

**Self-Discipline and Reverence:** Reverent behavior is not a natural tendency for most children. It is a quality that is taught by parents and leaders through example and training. But remember, if reverence is rooted in love, so is the teaching of it. Harshness in our training begets resentment, not reverence. So begin early and have reasonable expectations. A toddler *can* learn to fold his arms and get ready for prayer. But it takes time, patience, and consistency. Remember that we are not only teaching a child his first lessons in reverence, but the child may be mastering his first attempts at self-discipline.

**Child Development and Reverence:** This process of teaching and self-discipline continues line upon line and precept upon precept. Thus a child learns to be reverent during prayers and the sacrament. He sits by his parents during the meeting. Then he grows in lessons of self-discipline as later he learns to fast, to obey the Word of Wisdom, to make good Internet choices, and to keep the law of chastity. We each grow in ability as well as understanding. We bless our children and youth as we exemplify, teach, and encourage them through this process because self-mastery is not only the root of self-respect, it is essential in inviting the Spirit to teach, confirm, and testify.

**President Packer's Promise:** "While we may not see an immediate, miraculous transformation, as surely as the Lord lives, a quiet one will take place. The spiritual power in the lives of each member and in the Church will increase. The Lord will pour out his Spirit upon us more abundantly. We will be less troubled, less confused. We will find revealed answers to personal and family problems." President Boyd K. Packer

**Notes:**

## ***Suggestions for increasing reverence in your classes:***

- ✓ **Love those in your class.** Often the child who is the most disruptive needs your love the most.
- ✓ **Take the time to explain what reverence is and why it is important.** Display a picture of the Savior. Define behavior that is acceptable, and then be loving and consistent as you not only encourage it but expect it.
- ✓ **Be prepared.** Prepare not only the material, but prepare yourself to teach with the Spirit. Many problems with reverence can be defused with a well-prepared lesson in which the students participate.
- ✓ **Talk with parents of children who have disabilities** to determine a reasonable expectation for their child because every child deserves a chance to progress.
- ✓ **Use the resources of the ward to help.** Often if there is a reverence problem with children or youth, there is a reverence problem in the ward. Take concerns to the ward council, where ward leaders can work together to increase respect and reverence on every level.
- ✓ **What else has worked for you?** Do more of what works and less of what doesn't.