

There Is Strength In A Herd

I once was asked to speak to a group of teenage boys about the importance of families. I am a high school religion teacher and often speak to teens. But this assignment made me nervous because I knew it was a topic the boys weren't excited to hear.

Minutes before speaking I had an unusual experience. A visual image came to my mind as though someone had turned on a television set in my brain. I clearly saw a scene you might see on the Discovery Channel -- it was a lion scattering a herd of animals.

The image came so powerfully that it surprised me. I wondered if it had anything to do with the talk I was about to give. The understanding quickly came.

When a predator attacks a herd the first job is not the kill. There is strength in the herd and the predator knows it. The first job is to scatter. If the predator can separate the weak from the strong and the young from the powerful they become easy targets.

This was demonstrated powerfully in a National Geographic special I saw about mother elephants (cows) and their babies (calves). Elephant cows are careful to keep their calf within a step or two because danger is always waiting nearby. Lions sometimes stay as close as 20 feet. When the cow charges the lions they easily lope away. The lions understand they can never get to the calf with the powerful mother nearby. So they watch and wait for one of them to make a mistake.

The program then showed of one calf becoming separated from its mother. The lions quickly pounced on it, trying to bring it down and kill it. Somehow this lucky calf was able to escape and return to the safety of its mother.

We live in a society now filled with children not so lucky. Predators have successfully scattered and separated families. Children have become easy targets. These attacks are devastating not only families but entire societies.

In his book, *The Broken Hearth*, former US Secretary of Education William H. Bennett stated:

"It is fashionable these days to say and to believe that matters like divorce, illegitimacy, cohabitation, and single-parenting are "private" matters that are not the business of the wider community. To which I would respond: There are few matters of more profound public consequence than the condition of marriage and families. Most of our social pathologies -- crime, imprisonment rates, welfare, educational underachievement, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, depression, sexually-transmitted diseases -- are manifestations, direct and indirect, of the crack-up of the modern American family."

What is the answer? Former Secretary of State Colin Powell said it well:

"We either build our children or we build more jails. Time to stop building jails. Our children are not the problem, they are our future. If you want young people to become contributing citizens and not convicts, then early in life we must give them the character and the competence they need to succeed in this exciting new world. It begins in the home with caring, loving parents and family members who pass on the virtues of past generations" (GOP National Convention, July 31, 2000).

It begins with parents. We have the responsibility to stand close to our children, to make time for them, to love them, to teach them. If we do not they will become victims to the serious predators that now surround them.

There is strength in a herd.

About the Author

Timothy L. Carver is employed as a high school religion teacher for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is happily married, has two married children and two grandchildren. His hobbies include writing, golf and gardening. He is the co-founder of [Families In Zion](http://www.familiesinzion.com), a website that provides free family gospel lessons, inspirational stories, and object lessons.