A few weeks ago our youngest son and his wife and family stopped to see us. The first one out of the car was our two-year-old grandson. He came running to me with his arms outstretched, shouting, “Gwampa! Gwampa! Gwampa!”

He hugged my legs, and I looked down at that smiling face and those big, innocent eyes and thought, “What kind of a world awaits him?”

For a moment I had that feeling of anxiety, that fear of the future that so many parents express to us. Everywhere we go fathers and mothers worry about the future of their children in this very troubled world.

But then a feeling of assurance came over me. My fear of the future faded.

That guiding, comforting Spirit, with which we in the Church are so familiar, brought to my remembrance what I already knew. The fear of the future was gone. That bright-eyed, little two-year-old can have a good life—a very good life—and so can his children and his grandchildren, even though they will live in a world where there is much of wickedness.

They will see many events transpire in the course of their lifetime. Some of these shall tax their courage and extend their faith. But if they seek prayerfully for help and guidance, they shall be given power over adverse things. Such trials shall not be permitted to stand in the way of their progress, but instead shall act as stepping-stones to greater knowledge.

As a grandfather and as one of the Twelve, I will give you some counsel, some caution, and a lot of encouragement. I could do this much better if the grandmother in our family, my wife of 57 years, were standing beside me. Mothers know much more about life than fathers do, but I will do the best I can.

We do not fear the future for ourselves or for our children. We live in dangerously troubled times. The values that steadied mankind in earlier times are being tossed away.

We must not ignore Moroni’s words when he saw our day and said, “Ye [must] awake to a sense of your awful situation” (Ether 8:24).

We cannot take lightly this warning from the Book of Mormon:

“The Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him …… doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

“And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him” (Hel. 12:1–3; emphasis added).

Have you noticed that word terror in that prophetic Book of Mormon warning?

The moral values upon which civilization itself must depend spiral downward at an ever-increasing pace. Nevertheless, I do not fear the future.

World War I ended only six years before I was born. When we were children, the effects of the war were everywhere present. World War II came only 15 years later. And dark clouds were already gathering.

We had the same anxious feelings that many of you do now. We wondered what the future held for us in an unsettled world.

When I was a boy, childhood diseases appeared regularly in every community. When someone had chicken pox or measles or mumps, the health officer would visit the home and place a quarantine sign on the porch or in the window to warn everyone to stay away. In a large family like ours, those diseases would visit by relay, one child getting it from another, so the sign might stay up for weeks.

We could not blockade ourselves inside our homes or stay hidden away to avoid those terrible contagions. We had to go to school, to employment, to church—to life!

Two of my sisters were stricken with very severe cases of measles. At first they seemed to recover. A few weeks later Mother glanced out of the window and saw Adele, the younger of the two, leaning against a swing. She was faint and weak with a fever. It was rheumatic fever! It came as a complication from measles. The other sister also had the fever.

There was little that could be done. In spite of all of the prayers of my parents, Adele died. She was eight
years old.

While Nona, two years older, recovered, she had fragile health for most of her life.

When I was in the seventh grade, in a health class, the teacher read an article. A mother learned that the neighbor children had chicken pox. She faced the probability that her children would have it as well, perhaps one at a time. She determined to get it all over with at once.

So she sent her children to the neighbor’s to play with their children to let them be exposed, and then she would be done with it. Imagine her horror when the doctor finally came and announced that it was not chicken pox the children had; it was smallpox.

The best thing to do then and what we must do now is to avoid places where there is danger of physical or spiritual contagion.

We have little concern that our grandchildren will get the measles. They have been immunized and can move freely without fear of that.

While in much of the world measles has virtually been eradicated, it is still the leading cause of vaccine-preventable death in children.

From money generously donated by Latter-day Saints, the Church recently donated a million dollars to a cooperative effort to immunize the children of Africa against measles. For one dollar, one child can be protected.

Parents now are concerned about the moral and spiritual diseases. These can have terrible complications when standards and values are abandoned. We must all take protective measures.

With the proper serum, the physical body is protected against disease. We can also protect our children from moral and spiritual diseases.

The word inoculate has two parts: in — “to be within” — and oculate means “eye to see.”

When children are baptized and confirmed (see D&C 20:41, 43; D&C 33:15), we place an eye within them — the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 121:26). With the Restoration of the gospel came authority to confer this gift.

The Book of Mormon gives us the key:

“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. … Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you [and your children as well] all things what ye should do” (2 Ne. 32:3).

If you will accept it in your mind and cradle it in your feelings, a knowledge of the restored gospel and a testimony of Jesus Christ can spiritually immunize your children.

One thing is very clear: the safest place and the best protection against the moral and spiritual diseases is a stable home and family. This has always been true; it will be true forever. We must keep that foremost in our minds.

The scriptures speak of “the shield of faith wherewith,” the Lord said, “ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (D&C 27:17).

This shield of faith is best fabricated in a cottage industry. While the shield can be polished in classes in the Church and in activities, it is meant to be handcrafted in the home and fitted to each individual.

The Lord said, “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” (D&C 27:15).

Our young people in many ways are much stronger and better than we were. They and we should not be afraid of what is ahead.

Encourage our young people. They need not live in fear (see D&C 6:36). Fear is the opposite of faith.

While we cannot erase wickedness, we can produce young Latter-day Saints who, spiritually nourished, are immunized against evil influences.

As a grandfather who has lived a long time, I counsel you to have faith. Things have a way of working out. Stay close to the Church. Keep your children close to the Church.

In Alma’s day “the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it … had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5).

True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior.

Find happiness in ordinary things, and keep your sense of humor.

Nona recovered from measles and rheumatic fever. She lived long enough to benefit from open-heart surgery and enjoyed years of much improved health. Others spoke of her newly acquired energy. She said, “I have a Cadillac engine in a Model T frame.”

Keep your sense of humor!

Do not be afraid to bring children into the world. We are under covenant to provide physical bodies so that spirits may enter mortality (see Gen. 1:28; Moses 2:28). Children are the future of the restored Church.

Put your homes in order. If Mother is working outside of the home, see if there are ways to change that,
even a little. It may be very difficult to change at the present time. But analyze carefully and be prayerful (see D&C 9:8–9). Then expect to have inspiration, which is revelation (see D&C 8:2–3). Expect intervention from power from beyond the veil to help you move, in due time, to what is best for your family.

Alma called the plan of salvation “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8; see also 2 Ne. 11:5; Alma 12:25; Alma 17:16; Alma 34:9; Alma 41:2; Alma 42:5, 11–13, 15, 31; Moses 6:62).

Each of us came into mortality to receive a mortal body and to be tested (see Abr. 3:24–26).

Life will not be free from challenges, some of them bitter and hard to bear. We may wish to be spared all the trials of life, but that would be contrary to the great plan of happiness, “for it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Ne. 2:11). This testing is the source of our strength.

As an innocent child, my sister Adele’s life was cruelly interrupted by disease and suffering. She and all the others so taken continue the work of the Lord beyond the veil. She will not be denied anything essential for her eternal progression.

We also lost an infant granddaughter. She was named Emma after my mother. We receive comfort from the scriptures.

“Little children need no repentance, neither baptism.

…

“… Little children are alive in Christ” (Moro. 8:11–12).

Remember the Atonement of Christ. Do not despair or count as forever lost those who have fallen to the temptations of Satan. They will, after the debt is paid to “the uttermost farthing” (Matt. 5:26) and after the healing which attends complete repentance takes place, receive a salvation.

Follow the leaders who are called to preside over you, for the promise is given: “If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place” (D&C 124:45).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will go forward “until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2) and the great Jehovah announces that His work is done (see History of the Church, 4:540). The Church is a safe harbor. We will be protected by justice and comforted by mercy (see Alma 34:15–16). No unhallowed hand can stay the progress of this work (see D&C 76:3).

We are not blind to the conditions in the world.

The Apostle Paul prophesied of “perilous times” in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1), and he warned, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12).

Isaiah promised, “In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee” (Isa. 54:14).

The Lord Himself encouraged, “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” (D&C 68:6). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.