



**By Sarah Fernández**

## POLITICS AND PARENTHOOD

This month's theme is "Talking Points: The Perfect Blend of Politics and Religion." While it may be easy to initially think, "What do politics and religion have to do with motherhood?" this topic actually carries a lot of significance to parenthood in general.

We all know children are like sponges and learn from our example. People learn how to be responsible citizens at home first. One thing that often gets overlooked, however, is how parents interact with those with whom they disagree (politically, ideologically, religiously or otherwise). The way children see their parents treat them and others informs their worldview.

We strive to teach our children the values of kindness and respect toward others. But when we speak to our children with respect, but then speak disparagingly of others, we're inadvertently teaching them to have a double standard with those with whom they disagree. If they see us apologizing, working together with those with whom we disagree, or trying to genuinely understand people of different backgrounds than us, they're more likely to follow that example.

Irrespective of our parties or political leanings, the way we raise our kids can either add to the noise of society, or help

reduce it to build better understanding and critical thinking of complex issues. In this polarized world, there are many loud voices. The question is, do we want our children to be part of the loud noises, or do we want them to forge a better path of solution-building via understanding, empathy, and critical thinking?

As we head into the final weeks of election season, in a world where social media has dramatically changed our discourse, it's easy to be influenced by rapidly changing news cycles and the proliferation of overly simplistic memes to communicate complex ideas. It's crucial that we model healthy interactions, instead of allowing ourselves to be swayed by these influences. Many of us have been guilty of the same—myself included—yet we can change that. That's another lesson in parenting: having the honest self-awareness and introspection to admit where we need to grow, and working to improve those areas. This is the harder path, but our kids deserve that example.

*"May we ever choose the harder right than the easier wrong."*

—Thomas S. Monson