

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS

PARTICIPANT'S STUDY GUIDE



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Comments and Suggestions

Your comments and suggestions about this study guide would be appreciated.
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THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

WE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a

sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Course

The Marriage and Family Relations course is designed to help Church members strengthen marriages and families and find joy in their family relationships. It is divided into two parts. Part A, “Strengthening Marriages,” is particularly helpful for married couples and for members who are preparing to be married. Part B, “Parents’ Responsibilities to Strengthen Families,” assists parents and grandparents in their efforts to “bring [children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

The course is based on doctrines and principles taught in the scriptures and by latter-day prophets and apostles. It gives special emphasis to “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” which is included on page iv of this study guide.

For an overview of the course, see pages vii–viii. Refer to this overview often to review the doctrines and principles you have learned and to prepare yourself for upcoming lessons.

Attending the Course According to Your Own Needs

You have the option to attend according to your individual needs. For example, if you are married but do not have children, you may choose to attend the first eight lessons but not the final eight. If you are a single parent, you may decide to attend only the lessons in part B.

Participating in the Course

By choosing to participate in this course, you have demonstrated a desire to strengthen your family. To receive the full benefit of the course, you need to contribute to class discussions, use this study guide, and strive to apply the doctrines and principles you learn.

Contributing to Class Discussions

As you and other participants contribute to class discussions, you will be able to invite the influence of the Holy Ghost and teach and edify one another. The Lord said, “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one

speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122).

All who participate in the course can learn from each other, regardless of their experience with marriage or raising children. Your experience in the classroom will be most rewarding as you share experiences that relate to the lessons and listen respectfully when others do the same. As you testify of truths that are discussed, you can strengthen your testimony and the testimonies of others. However, you should be careful not to discuss intimate or sacred experiences that are inappropriate for classroom discussion. You should also be aware of the time limits of the class and be considerate of the teacher and other participants.

Using This Study Guide

In the week following each lesson, use this study guide to review what you have learned. The study guide contains “Ideas for Application,” which are suggestions to help you live according to the doctrines and principles you have learned in each lesson. In addition, one or two articles by General Authorities of the Church accompany each lesson. If you are married, you can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles with your spouse.

Some of the articles were originally given as discourses in general conference and other settings, and others were written for the Church magazines. Because they have been taken from different publications, minor modifications have been necessary to make the format in this study guide consistent. For example, some introductory comments have been removed from the general conference addresses, and some headings and citations have been changed. The teachings remain unchanged.

Applying the Doctrines and Principles You Learn

It is not enough to merely learn the gospel. For the gospel to be effective in your life, you must live what you learn. President Harold B. Lee, the 11th President of the Church, counseled:

“All the principles and ordinances of the gospel are in a sense but invitations to learning the gospel by the practice of its teachings. No person knows the principle of tithing until he pays tithing. No one knows the principle of the Word of Wisdom until he keeps the Word of Wisdom. Children, or grownups for that matter, are not converted to tithing, the Word of Wisdom, keeping the Sabbath day holy, or prayer by hearing someone talk about these principles. We learn the gospel by living it. . . .

“. . . We never really know anything of the teachings of the gospel until we have experienced the blessings that come from living each principle” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 215).

Additional Resources

The following Church-produced resources provide additional information on subjects discussed in this course. They are available through Church distribution centers. You may want to obtain these publications and use them in your home.

- *Family Guidebook* (31180). This guidebook describes the organization of the family, provides information about teaching the gospel in the home, and outlines procedures for priesthood ordinances and blessings.
- Articles about marriage and the family in Church magazines.
- *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106). This book helps parents and children prepare lessons for family home evening (pages 3–160, 173–232). It contains ideas for making family home evening successful (pages 163–70) and includes suggestions for teaching specific principles and responsibilities to children (pages 235–62). It also contains ideas for family activities (pages 265–340).
- *Teaching, No Greater Call* (36123). This resource contains principles and practical suggestions to help Church members improve as gospel teachers. Part D, “Teaching in the Home” (pages 125–48), is particularly helpful for parents.
- *Teaching Guidebook* (54595). This guidebook provides suggestions for improving gospel teaching and learning.
- *For the Strength of Youth* (34285). This pamphlet outlines the Church’s standards for dating, dress and appearance, friendship, honesty, language, media, mental and physical health, music and dancing, sexual purity, Sunday behavior, repentance, worthiness, and service.
- *A Parent’s Guide* (31125). This handbook contains suggestions to help parents teach their children about physical intimacy.
- *Guidebook for Parents and Guardians of Handicapped Children* (31123). This guidebook offers counsel for families with children who have disabilities. It also contains information about Church-produced materials to help parents and others who teach those with disabilities.
- *Cornerstones of a Happy Home* (33108). This pamphlet contains an address given by President Gordon B. Hinckley while he was serving as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.
- *Being a Righteous Husband and Father* (35402). This pamphlet contains an address given by President Howard W. Hunter, the 14th President of the Church.
- *One for the Money: Guide to Family Finance* (33293). This pamphlet, by Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, provides practical suggestions on managing family finances.

OVERVIEW OF THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS COURSE

PART A: STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES

LESSON 1: “THE FAMILY IS CENTRAL TO THE CREATOR’S PLAN”

Latter-day prophets proclaim the eternal importance of marriage and the family.

Eternal marriage can bring joy and great blessings in this life and throughout eternity.

The Marriage and Family Relations course is designed to help us find joy in our family relationships.

Our homes can be “a bit of heaven” as we build “upon the rock of our Redeemer.”

LESSON 2: DEVELOPING UNITY IN MARRIAGE

The Lord has commanded husbands and wives to be one.

Husbands and wives are to value each other as equal partners.

Husbands and wives should allow their individual characteristics and abilities to complement one another.

Husbands and wives must be loyal to one another.

LESSON 3: NURTURING LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE

Husbands and wives need to nurture their love for one another.

Expressions of affection and kindness keep love and friendship alive in marriage.

Proper intimacy in marriage is an expression of love.

Married couples should strive to have charity, the pure love of Christ.

LESSON 4: RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES IN MARRIAGE

All married couples will experience challenges.

Husbands and wives can work through any challenge if they view marriage as a covenant relationship.

When challenges arise, we can choose to respond with patience and love rather than frustration or anger.

LESSON 5: RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES THROUGH POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Every married couple will have some differences of opinion.

Husbands and wives should look for the admirable qualities in one another.

Positive communication helps prevent and resolve difficulties.

LESSON 6: STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES THROUGH FAITH AND PRAYER

Husbands and wives should work together to increase their faith in Jesus Christ.

Husbands and wives are blessed when they pray together.

LESSON 7: THE HEALING POWER OF FORGIVENESS

A spirit of forgiveness between husband and wife helps bring peace and a feeling of trust and security.

Husbands and wives should seek each other’s forgiveness for their shortcomings and make sincere efforts to improve.

Husbands and wives should seek to forgive one another.

LESSON 8: MANAGING FAMILY FINANCES

Proper financial management is essential for a happy marriage.

Husbands and wives should work together to follow basic principles of money management.

PART B: PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES

LESSON 9: "CHILDREN ARE AN HERITAGE OF THE LORD"

Heavenly Father entrusts His spirit children to earthly parents.

Parents should seek to meet each child's individual needs.

Children are entitled to a loving relationship with their parents.

Child abuse is an offense to God.

Children bring great joy into their parents' lives.

LESSON 10: THE SACRED ROLES OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS (PART 1: FATHERS' ROLES)

Fathers and mothers should work together to provide each of their children with a shield of faith.

Fathers are to preside in love and righteousness.

Fathers are to provide their families with the necessities of life and protection.

LESSON 11: THE SACRED ROLES OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS (PART 2: MOTHERS' ROLES)

Mothers participate in God's work.

Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.

Fathers and mothers are to help one another as equal partners.

LESSON 12: TEACHING CHILDREN THROUGH EXAMPLE AND INSTRUCTION

Parents are responsible to teach their children.

Parents can receive inspiration in teaching their children.

Parents teach through example and instruction.

LESSON 13: TEACHING GOSPEL PRINCIPLES TO CHILDREN (PART 1)

Parents' teachings can help children stay strong in the faith.

Parents are to teach their children the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Parents should "teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord."

LESSON 14: TEACHING GOSPEL PRINCIPLES TO CHILDREN (PART 2)

Parents show love for their children when they teach them.

Parents must teach children compassion and service.

Parents must teach children honesty and respect for others' property.

Parents must teach children about the rewards of honest labor.

Parents must teach children moral purity.

LESSON 15: GUIDING CHILDREN AS THEY MAKE DECISIONS

Children need guidance as they make decisions.

Parents can help children exercise their agency righteously.

Parents should allow children to learn from the consequences of unwise decisions.

Parents should show unfailing love for children who go astray.

LESSON 16: FAMILY PRAYER, FAMILY SCRIPTURE STUDY, AND FAMILY HOME EVENING

Family prayer and scripture study and family home evening must be high priorities for every Latter-day Saint family.

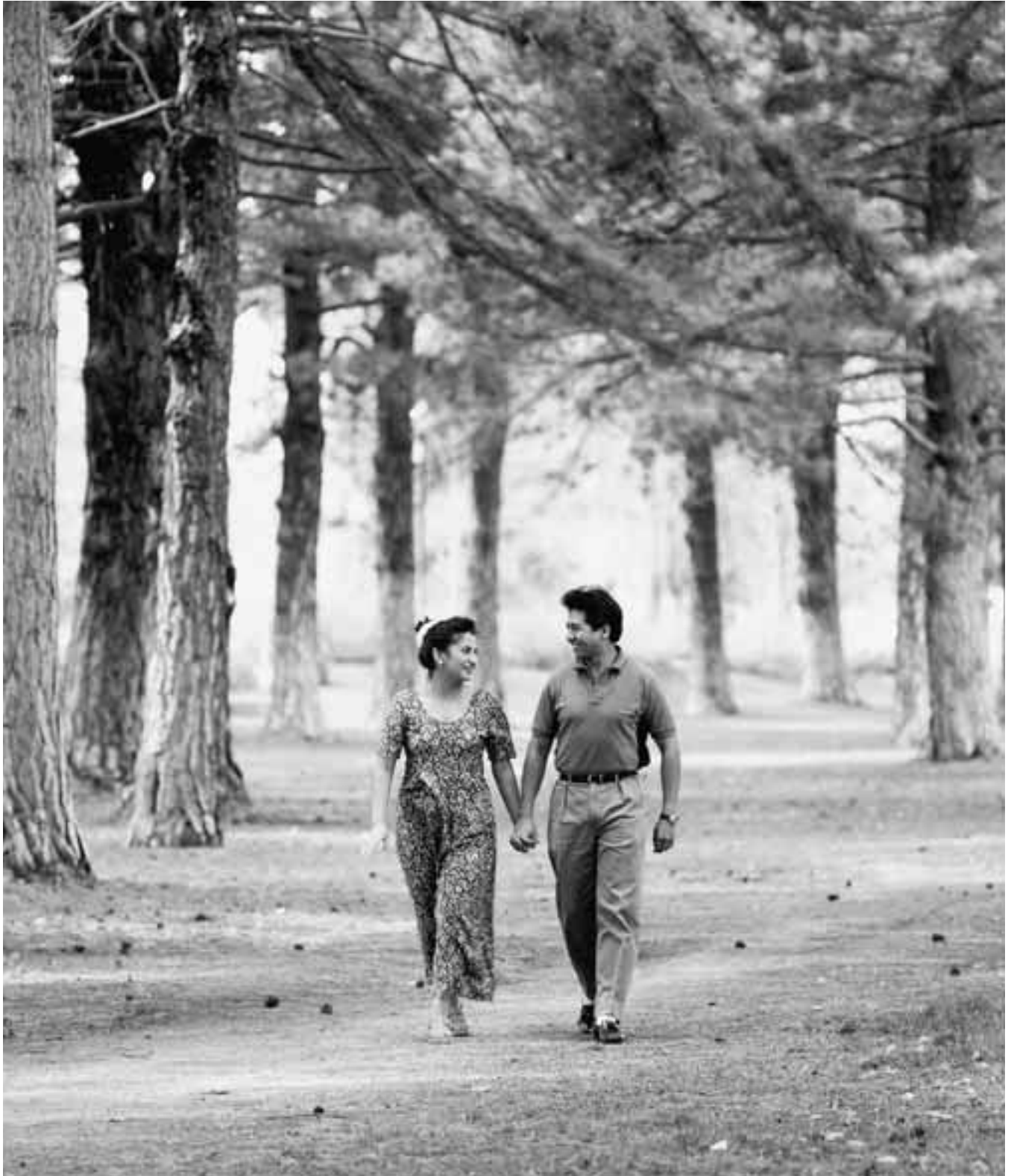
Families receive great blessings when they pray together.

Family scripture study helps families draw nearer to God.

Family home evening helps families fortify themselves against worldly influences.

PART A

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES



“THE FAMILY IS CENTRAL TO THE CREATOR’S PLAN”

1

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Review “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (page iv). Determine ways you will better follow this prophetic counsel.
- Obtain a poster of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (35602 or 35538) from a Church distribution center. Display it prominently in your home.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

FOR TIME AND ALL ETERNITY

Elder Boyd K. Packer
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Great Plan of Happiness

Dear brethren and sisters, the scriptures and the teachings of the apostles and prophets speak of us in premortal life as sons and daughters, spirit children of God.¹ Gender existed before, and did not begin at mortal birth.²

In the great council in heaven,³ God’s plan was presented:⁴ the plan of salvation,⁵ the plan of redemption,⁶ the great plan of happiness.⁷ The plan provides for a proving; all must choose between good and evil.⁸ His plan provides for a Redeemer, an atonement, the Resurrection, and, if we obey, our return to the presence of God.

The adversary rebelled and adopted a plan of his own.⁹ Those who followed him were denied the right to a mortal body.¹⁰ Our presence here confirms that we sanctioned our Father’s plan.¹¹

The single purpose of Lucifer is to oppose the great plan of happiness, to corrupt the purest, most beautiful and appealing experiences of life: romance, love, marriage, and parenthood.¹² The specters of heartbreak and guilt¹³ follow him about. Only repentance can heal what he hurts.

God’s Plan Requires Marriage and Family

The plan of happiness requires the righteous union of male and female, man and woman, husband and wife.¹⁴ Doctrines teach us how to respond to the

compelling natural impulses which too often dominate how we behave.

A body patterned after the image of God was created for Adam,¹⁵ and he was introduced into the Garden.¹⁶ At first, Adam was alone. He held the priesthood,¹⁷ but, alone, he could not fulfill the purposes of his creation.¹⁸

No other man would do. Neither alone nor with other men could Adam progress. Nor could Eve with another woman. It was so then. It is so today.

Eve, an helpmeet, was created. Marriage was instituted,¹⁹ for Adam was commanded to cleave unto his wife (not just to a woman) and “to none else.”²⁰

A choice, it might be said, was imposed upon Eve.²¹ She should be praised for her decision. Then “Adam fell that men might be.”²²

Elder Orson F. Whitney described the Fall as having “a twofold direction—downward, yet forward. It brought man into the world and set his feet upon progression’s highway.”²³

God blessed Adam and Eve “and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply.”²⁴ And so the family was established.

God Values Men and Women Equally

There is nothing in the revelations which suggests that to be a man rather than to be a woman is preferred in the sight of God, or that He places a higher value on sons than on daughters.

All virtues listed in the scriptures—love, joy, peace, faith, godliness, charity—are shared by both men and women,²⁵ and the highest priesthood

ordinance in mortality is given only to man and woman together.²⁶

After the Fall, natural law had far-reaching sovereignty over mortal birth. There are what President J. Reuben Clark Jr. called “pranks” of nature,²⁷ which cause a variety of abnormalities, deficiencies, and deformities. However unfair they seem to man’s way of reasoning, they somehow suit the purposes of the Lord in the proving of mankind.

The following of every worthy instinct, the responding to every righteous urge, the consummating of every exalting human relationship are provided for and approved in the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ and are protected by commandments revealed to His Church.

The Roles of Men and Women

Except Adam and Eve by nature be different from one another, they could not multiply and fill the earth.²⁸ The complementing differences are the very key to the plan of happiness.

Some roles are best suited to the masculine nature and others to the feminine nature. Both the scriptures and the patterns of nature place man as the protector, the provider.²⁹

Those responsibilities of the priesthood which have to do with the administration of the Church of necessity function outside the home. By divine decree, they have been entrusted to men. It has been that way since the beginning, for the Lord revealed that “the order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son. . . . This order was instituted in the days of Adam.”³⁰

A man who holds the priesthood does not have an advantage over a woman in qualifying for exaltation. The woman, by her very nature, is also co-creator with God and the primary nurturer of the children. Virtues and attributes upon which perfection and exaltation depend come naturally to a woman and are refined through marriage and motherhood.

The priesthood is conferred only upon worthy men in order to conform to our Father’s plan of happiness. With the laws of nature and the revealed word of God working in harmony, it simply works best that way.

The priesthood carries with it awesome responsibility. “No power or influence *can* or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge.”³¹

Should a man “exercise control or dominion or compulsion . . . in any degree of unrighteousness,”³² he violates “the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.”³³ Then “the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved.”³⁴ Unless he repents, he will lose his blessings.

While the different roles of man and woman are set forth in exalted celestial declarations, they are best demonstrated in the most practical, ordinary, down-to-earth experiences of family life.

Recently I heard a speaker in sacrament meeting complain that he could not understand why his grandchildren always spoke of going to *Grandma’s* house, never to *Grandpa’s* house. I solved that great mystery for him: Grandpas don’t bake pies!

Natural and Spiritual Laws Are Eternal

Natural and spiritual laws which govern life were instituted from before the foundation of the world.³⁵ They are eternal, as are the consequences for either obeying or disobeying them. They are not based on social or political considerations. They cannot be changed. No pressure, no protest, no legislation can alter them.

Years ago I supervised the Indian seminaries. When I visited a school at Albuquerque, the principal told me of an incident that happened in a first-grade class.

During a lesson, a kitten wandered into the room and distracted the youngsters. It was brought to the front of the room so all could see it.

One youngster asked, “Is it a boy kitty or a girl kitty?”

The teacher, unprepared for that discussion, said, “It doesn’t matter; it’s just a kitten.”

But the children persisted, and one little boy said, “I know how we can tell if it is a boy kitty or a girl kitty.”

The teacher, cornered, said, “All right, you tell us how we can tell if it is a boy kitty or a girl kitty.”

The boy answered, “We can vote on it!”

Some things cannot be changed. Doctrine cannot be changed.

“Principles which have been revealed,” President Wilford Woodruff said, “for the salvation and exaltation of the children of men . . . are principles you cannot annihilate. *They are principles that no combination of men [or women] can destroy.* They are principles that can never die. . . . They are beyond the reach of man to handle or to destroy. . . . It is not

in the power of the whole world put together to destroy those principles. . . . Not one jot or tittle of these principles will ever be destroyed."³⁶

During World War II, men were called away to fight. In the emergency, wives and mothers worldwide were drawn into the workforce as never before. The most devastating effect of the war was on the family. It lingers to this generation.

Multiply and Replenish the Earth

In the October 1942 general conference, the First Presidency delivered a message to "the Saints in every land and clime," in which they said, "By virtue of the authority in us vested as the First Presidency of the Church, we warn our people."

And they said: "Amongst His earliest commands to Adam and Eve, the Lord said: 'Multiply and replenish the earth.' He has repeated that command in our day. He has again revealed in this, the last dispensation, the principle of the eternity of the marriage covenant. . . .

"The Lord has told us that it is the duty of every husband and wife to obey the command given to Adam to multiply and replenish the earth, so that the legions of choice spirits waiting for their tabernacles of flesh may come here and move forward under God's great design to become perfect souls, for without these fleshly tabernacles they cannot progress to their God-planned destiny. Thus, every husband and wife should become a father and mother in Israel to children born under the holy, eternal covenant.

"By bringing these choice spirits to earth, each father and each mother assume towards the tabernacled spirit and towards the Lord Himself by having taken advantage of the opportunity He offered, an obligation of the most sacred kind, because the fate of that spirit in the eternities to come, the blessings or punishments which shall await it in the hereafter, depend, in great part, upon the care, the teachings, the training which the parents shall give to that spirit.

"No parent can escape that obligation and that responsibility, and for the proper meeting thereof, the Lord will hold us to a strict accountability. No loftier duty than this can be assumed by mortals."

Motherhood Is a Holy Calling

Speaking of mothers, the First Presidency said: "Motherhood thus becomes a holy calling, a sacred dedication for carrying out the Lord's plans, a consecration of devotion to the uprearing and fostering,

the nurturing in body, mind, and spirit, of those who kept their first estate and who come to this earth for their second estate 'to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.' (Abraham 3:25) To lead them to keep their second estate is the work of motherhood, and 'they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.' (op. cit.) [Abraham 3:26]

"This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public nurseries cannot do it; hired help cannot do it—only mother, aided as much as may be by the loving hands of father, brothers, and sisters, can give the full needed measure of watchful care."

The First Presidency counseled that "the mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, or for civic service, should remember that 'a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.' (Prov. 29:15) In our day the Lord has said that unless parents teach their children the doctrines of the Church 'the sin be upon the heads of the parents.' (D&C 68:25)

"Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels."³⁷

That message and warning from the First Presidency is needed more, not less, today than when it was given. And no voice from any organization of the Church on any level of administration equals that of the First Presidency.³⁸

Any souls who by nature or circumstance are not afforded the blessing of marriage and parenthood, or who innocently must act alone in rearing children and working to support them, will not be denied in the eternities any blessing—provided they keep the commandments.³⁹ As President Lorenzo Snow promised, "That is sure and positive."⁴⁰

Parable of the Treasure and Keys

I close with a parable.

Once a man received as his inheritance two keys. The first key, he was told, would open a vault which he must protect at all cost. The second key was to a safe within the vault which contained a priceless treasure. He was to open this safe and freely use the precious things which were stored therein. He was warned that many would seek to rob him of his inheritance. He was promised that if he used

the treasure worthily, it would be replenished and never be diminished, not in all eternity. He would be tested. If he used it to benefit others, his own blessings and joy would increase.

The man went alone to the vault. His first key opened the door. He tried to unlock the treasure with the other key, but he could not, for there were two locks on the safe. His key alone would not open it. No matter how he tried, he could not open it. He was puzzled. He had been given the keys. He knew the treasure was rightfully his. He had obeyed instructions, but he could not open the safe.

In due time there came a woman into the vault. She too held a key. It was noticeably different from the key he held. Her key fit the other lock. It humbled him to learn that he could not obtain his rightful inheritance without her.

They made a covenant that together they would open the treasure and, as instructed, he would watch over the vault and protect it; she would watch over the treasure. She was not concerned that, as guardian of the vault, he held two keys, for his full purpose was to see that she was safe as she watched over that which was most precious to them both. Together they opened the safe and partook of their inheritance. They rejoiced, for, as promised, it replenished itself.

With great joy they found that they could pass the treasure on to their children; each could receive a full measure, undiminished to the last generation.

Perhaps some few of their posterity would not find a companion who possessed the complementary key, or one worthy and willing to keep the covenants relating to the treasure. Nevertheless, if they kept the commandments, they would not be denied even the smallest blessing.

Because some tempted them to misuse their treasure, they were careful to teach their children about keys and covenants.

There came, in due time, among their posterity some few who were deceived or jealous or selfish because one was given two keys and another only one. "Why," the selfish ones reasoned, "cannot the treasure be mine alone to use as I desire?"

Some tried to reshape the key they had been given to resemble the other key. Perhaps, they thought, it would then fit both locks. And so it was that the safe was closed to them. Their reshaped keys were useless, and their inheritance was lost.

Those who received the treasure with gratitude and obeyed the laws concerning it knew joy without bounds through time and all eternity.

I bear witness of our Father's plan for happiness, and bear testimony in the name of Him who wrought the Atonement, that it might be.

From an address by Elder Packer in the October 1993 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 27-31; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 21-24).

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:24; see also Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:63; First Presidency, "The Origin of Man" (Nov. 1909), in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965-75), 4:203; see also Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 71; Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 115; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 83.
3. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 348-49, 357, 365.
4. See Abraham 3:24-27.
5. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
6. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25-36; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13-14; 39:18; 42:11, 13.
7. Alma 42:8.
8. See Alma 42:2-5.
9. See 2 Nephi 9:28; Alma 12:4-5; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 1:16; Doctrine and Covenants 10:12, 23; Moses 4:3.
10. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181, 297.
11. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181.
12. See 2 Nephi 2:18; 28:20.
13. See Alma 39:5; Moroni 9:9.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:2; 131:2; 1 Corinthians 11:11; Ephesians 5:31.
15. See Moses 6:8-9.
16. See Moses 3:8.
17. See Moses 6:67.
18. See Moses 3:18.
19. See Moses 3:23-24.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 42:22.
21. See Moses 4:7-12.
22. 2 Nephi 2:25.
23. *Cowley and Whitney on Doctrine*, comp. Forace Green (1963), 287.
24. Moses 2:28; see also Genesis 1:28; 9:1.
25. See Galatians 5:22-23; Doctrine and Covenants 4:5-6; Alma 7:23-24.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:2.
27. See "Our Wives and Our Mothers in the Eternal Plan" (address given in general Relief Society conference, 3 Oct. 1946), in *J. Reuben Clark: Selected Papers on Religion, Education, and Youth*, ed. David H. Yarn Jr. (1984), 62.
28. See Genesis 1:28, note 28c.

29. See Doctrine and Covenants 75:28; 1 Timothy 5:8.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 107:40–41; see also
Doctrine and Covenants 84:14–16.
31. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42; italics added.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 84:39.
34. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
35. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 308, 367.
36. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham
(1946), 25–26; italics added.
37. In Conference Report, Oct. 1942, 7, 11–12.
38. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:8–9, 22, 91.
39. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9.
40. "Discourse by President Lorenzo Snow," *Millennial Star*,
31 Aug. 1899, 547.

DEVELOPING UNITY IN MARRIAGE

2

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Read the following scripture passages about unity: 1 Corinthians 1:9–10; Philippians 1:27; Mosiah 18:21; Doctrine and Covenants 38:27. Ponder how these passages might apply to the relationship between a husband and wife.
- Discuss with your spouse the demands the two of you have on your time, including social, occupational, community, and Church commitments. Take time to understand each other's needs, and ensure that your other commitments do not interfere with your loyalty to one another.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

THAT WE MAY BE ONE

Elder Henry B. Eyring
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“If Ye Are Not One Ye Are Not Mine”

The Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, said of those who would be part of His Church: “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). And at the creation of man and woman, unity for them in marriage was not given as hope; it was a command! “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Our Heavenly Father wants our hearts to be knit together. That union in love is not simply an ideal. It is a necessity.

The requirement that we be one is not for this life alone. It is to be without end. The first marriage was performed by God in the garden when Adam and Eve were immortal. He placed in men and women from the beginning a desire to be joined together as man and wife forever to dwell in families in a perfect, righteous union. He placed in His children a desire to live at peace with all those around them.

But with the Fall it became clear that living in unity would not be easy. Tragedy struck early. Cain slew Abel, his brother. The children of Adam and Eve had become subject to the temptations of Satan. With skill, hatred, and cunning, Satan pursues his goal. It is the opposite of the purpose of our Heavenly Father and the Savior. They would give us perfect union and eternal happiness. Satan,

their enemy and ours, has known the plan of salvation from before the Creation. He knows that only in eternal life can those sacred, joyful associations of families endure. Satan would tear us from loved ones and make us miserable. And it is he who plants the seeds of discord in human hearts in the hope that we might be divided and separate.

All of us have felt something of both union and separation. Sometimes in families and perhaps in other settings we have glimpsed life when one person put the interests of another above his or her own, in love and with sacrifice. And all of us know something of the sadness and loneliness of being separate and alone. We don't need to be told which we should choose. We know. But we need hope that we can experience unity in this life and qualify to have it forever in the world to come. And we need to know how that great blessing will come so that we can know what we must do.

The Savior Makes Unity Possible

The Savior of the world spoke of that unity and how we will have our natures changed to make it possible. He taught it clearly in the prayer He gave in His last meeting with His Apostles before His death. That supernally beautiful prayer is recorded in the book of John. He was about to face the terrible sacrifice for all of us that would make eternal life possible. He was about to leave the Apostles whom He had ordained, whom He loved, and with whom He would leave the keys to lead His Church. And so He prayed to His Father, the perfect Son to the

perfect Parent. We see in His words the way families will be made one, as will all the children of our Heavenly Father who follow the Savior and His servants:

“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:18–21).

In those few words He made clear how the gospel of Jesus Christ can allow hearts to be made one. Those who would believe the truth He taught could accept the ordinances and the covenants offered by His authorized servants. Then, through obedience to those ordinances and covenants, their natures would be changed. The Savior’s Atonement in that way makes it possible for us to be sanctified. We can then live in unity, as we must to have peace in this life and to dwell with the Father and His Son in eternity.

The ministry of the apostles and prophets in that day, as it is today, was to bring the children of Adam and Eve to a unity of the faith in Jesus Christ. The ultimate purpose of what they taught, and of what we teach, is to unite families: husbands, wives, children, grandchildren, ancestors, and finally all of the family of Adam and Eve who will choose it.

The Spirit Leads to Union with Others

You remember the Savior prayed, “For their sakes”—speaking of the Apostles—“I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier. We can have it as our companion because the Lord restored the Melchizedek Priesthood through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The keys of that priesthood are on the earth today. By its power we can make covenants which allow us to have the Holy Ghost constantly.

Where people have that Spirit with them, we may expect harmony. The Spirit puts the testimony of truth in our hearts, which unifies those who share that testimony. The Spirit of God never generates contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29). It never generates the feelings of distinctions between people which lead to strife (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 131). It leads to personal peace and a feeling of union with others. It unifies souls. A unified family, a unified Church, and a world at peace depend on unified souls.

Keeping the Promises Made in the Sacrament Prayer

Even a child can understand what to do to have the Holy Ghost as a companion. The sacrament prayer tells us. We hear it every week as we attend our sacrament meetings. In those sacred moments we renew the covenants we made at baptism. And the Lord reminds us of the promise we received as we were confirmed members of the Church—the promise that we might receive the Holy Ghost. Here are the words of the sacrament prayer: “They are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them” (D&C 20:77).

We can have His Spirit by keeping that covenant. First, we promise to take His name upon us. That means we must see ourselves as His. We will put Him first in our lives. We will want what He wants rather than what we want or what the world teaches us to want. As long as we love the things of the world first, there will be no peace in us. Holding an ideal for a family or a nation of comfort through material goods will, at last, divide them (see Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 97). The ideal of doing for each other what the Lord would have us do, which follows naturally from taking His name upon us, can take us to a spiritual level which is a touch of heaven on earth.

Second, we promise always to remember Him. We do that every time we pray in His name. Especially when we ask for His forgiveness, as we must do often, we remember Him. At that moment we remember His sacrifice that makes repentance and forgiveness possible. When we plead, we remember Him as our Advocate with the Father. When the feelings of forgiveness and peace come, we remember His patience and His endless love. That remembering fills our hearts with love.

We also keep our promise to remember Him when as families we pray together and when we read the scriptures. At family prayer around a breakfast table, one child may pray for another to be blessed that things will go well that day in a test or in some performance. When the blessings come, the child blessed will remember the love of the morning and the kindness of the Advocate in whose name the prayer was offered. Hearts will be bound in love.

We keep our covenant to remember Him every time we gather our families to read the scriptures. They testify of the Lord Jesus Christ, for that is the message and always has been of prophets. Even if children do not remember the words, they will remember the true Author, who is Jesus Christ.

Obey All of the Commandments

Third, we promise as we take the sacrament to keep His commandments, all of them. President J. Reuben Clark Jr., as he pled—as he did many times—for unity in a general conference talk, warned us against being selective in what we will obey. He put it this way: “The Lord has given us nothing that is useless or unnecessary. He has filled the Scriptures with the things which we should do in order that we may gain salvation.”

President Clark went on: “When we partake of the Sacrament we covenant to obey and keep his commandments. There are no exceptions. There are no distinctions, no differences” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1955, 10–11). President Clark taught that just as we repent of all sin, not just a single sin, we pledge to keep all the commandments. Hard as that sounds, it is uncomplicated. We simply submit to the authority of the Savior and promise to be obedient to whatever He commands (see Mosiah 3:19). It is our surrender to the authority of Jesus Christ which will allow us to be bound as families, as a Church, and as the children of our Heavenly Father.

The Lord conveys that authority through His prophet to humble servants. That faith turns our call as a home teacher or a visiting teacher into an errand from the Lord. We go for Him, at His command. An ordinary man and a teenage junior companion go into homes expecting that the powers of heaven will help them assure that families are united and that there is no hardness, lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking. That faith—that the Lord calls servants—will help us ignore their limitations when they reprove us, as they will. We will see their good intent more clearly than their human limitations. We will be less likely to feel offense and more likely to feel gratitude to the Master who called them.

Charity Is Essential to Unity

There are some commandments which, when broken, destroy unity. Some have to do with what we say and some with how we react to what others say. We must speak no ill of anyone. We must see the good in each other and speak well of each other whenever we can (see David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 4–11).

At the same time, we must stand against those who speak contemptuously of sacred things, because the certain effect of that offense is to offend the Spirit and so create contention and confusion. President Spencer W. Kimball showed the way to stand without being contentious as he lay on a hospital gurney and asked an attendant who, in a moment of frustration,

took the name of the Lord in vain: “ ‘Please! Please! That is my Lord whose names you revile.’ There was a deathly silence, then a subdued voice whispered: ‘I am sorry’ ” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 198). An inspired, loving rebuke can be an invitation to unity. Failure to give it when moved upon by the Holy Ghost will lead to discord.

If we are to have unity, there are commandments we must keep concerning how we feel. We must forgive and bear no malice toward those who offend us. The Savior set the example from the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). We do not know the hearts of those who offend us. Nor do we know all the sources of our own anger and hurt. The Apostle Paul was telling us how to love in a world of imperfect people, including ourselves, when he said, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4–5). And then he gave solemn warning against reacting to the fault of others and forgetting our own when he wrote, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as . . . I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Stay Clean and Beware of Pride

The sacrament prayer can remind us every week of how the gift of unity will come through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we keep our covenants to take His name upon us, to remember Him always, and to keep all His commandments, we will receive the companionship of His Spirit. That will soften our hearts and unite us. But there are two warnings which must come with that promise.

First, the Holy Ghost remains with us only if we stay clean and free from the love of the things of the world. A choice to be unclean will repel the Holy Ghost. The Spirit dwells only with those who choose the Lord over the world. “Be ye clean” (3 Nephi 20:41; D&C 38:42) and love God with all your “heart, . . . might, mind, and strength” (D&C 59:5) are not suggestions but commandments. And they are necessary to the companionship of the Spirit, without which we cannot be one.

The other warning is to beware of pride. A unity which comes to a family or to a people softened by the Spirit will bring great power. With that power will come recognition from the world. Whether that recognition brings praise or envy, it could lead us to

pride. That would offend the Spirit. There is a protection against pride, that sure source of disunity. It is to see the bounties which God pours upon us not only as a mark of His favor but an opportunity to join with those around us in greater service. A man and his wife learn to be one by using their similarities to understand each other and their differences to complement each other in serving one another and those around them. In the same way, we can unite with those who do not accept our doctrine but share our desire to bless the children of our Heavenly Father.

We can become peacemakers, worthy to be called blessed and the children of God (see Matthew 5:9).

God our Father lives. His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, is the head of this Church, and He offers to all who will accept it the standard of peace.

From an address by Elder Eyring in the April 1998 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 85–89; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 66–68).

NURTURING LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE

3

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Study Moroni 7:45–48. Make a list of the characteristics of charity that are mentioned in this passage. Make a commitment to improve on these characteristics in your life. Consider ways these characteristics can help husbands and wives nurture their love and friendship.
- With your spouse, make a plan to spend time alone together each week. It may be necessary to schedule these times by writing reminders in a calendar or notebook.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

ONENESS IN MARRIAGE

President Spencer W. Kimball
12th President of the Church

Honorable, happy, and successful marriage is surely the principal goal of every normal person. Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but also their families and particularly their children and their children's children down through the many generations.

In selecting a companion for life and for eternity, certainly the most careful planning and thinking and praying and fasting should be done to be sure that of all the decisions, this one must not be wrong. In true marriage there must be a union of minds as well as of hearts. Emotions must not wholly determine decisions, but the mind and the heart, strengthened by fasting and prayer and serious consideration, will give one a maximum chance of marital happiness. It brings with it sacrifice, sharing, and a demand for great selflessness.

Many of the TV screen shows and stories of fiction end with marriage: "They lived happily ever after." We have come to realize that the mere performance of a ceremony does not bring happiness and a successful marriage. Happiness does not come by pressing a button, as does the electric light; happiness is a state of mind and comes from within. It must be

earned. It cannot be purchased with money; it cannot be taken for nothing.

Some think of happiness as a glamorous life of ease, luxury, and constant thrills; but true marriage is based on a happiness which is more than that, one which comes from giving, serving, sharing, sacrificing, and selflessness.

Two people coming from different backgrounds learn soon after the ceremony is performed that stark reality must be faced. There is no longer a life of fantasy or of make-believe; we must come out of the clouds and put our feet firmly on the earth. Responsibility must be assumed and new duties must be accepted. Some personal freedoms must be relinquished, and many adjustments, unselfish adjustments, must be made.

One comes to realize very soon after marriage that the spouse has weaknesses not previously revealed or discovered. The virtues which were constantly magnified during courtship now grow relatively smaller, and the weaknesses which seemed so small and insignificant during courtship now grow to sizable proportions. The hour has come for understanding hearts, for self-appraisal, and for good common sense, reasoning, and planning. The habits of years now show themselves; the spouse may be stingy or prodigal, lazy or industrious, devout or irreligious; he may be kind and cooperative or petulant and cross, demanding or giving, egotistical or self-effacing. The in-law problem comes closer into focus, and the relationships of the spouse to them is again magnified.

Often there is an unwillingness to settle down and to assume the heavy responsibilities that immediately are there. Economy is reluctant to replace lavish living, and the young people seem often too eager “to keep up with the Joneses.” There is often an unwillingness to make the financial adjustments necessary. Young wives are often demanding that all the luxuries formerly enjoyed in the prosperous homes of their successful fathers be continued in their own homes. Some of them are quite willing to help earn that lavish living by continuing employment after marriage. They consequently leave the home, where their duty lies, to pursue professional or business pursuits, thus establishing an economy that becomes stabilized so that it becomes very difficult to yield toward the normal family life. Through both spouses’ working, competition rather than cooperation enters the family. Two weary workers return home with taut nerves, individual pride, increased independence, and then misunderstandings arise. Little frictions pyramid into monumental ones.

While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person. “Soul mates” are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price.

There is a never-failing formula which will guarantee to every couple a happy and eternal marriage; but like all formulas, the principal ingredients must not be left out, reduced, or limited. The selection before courting and then the continued courting after the marriage process are equally important, but not more important than the marriage itself, the success of which depends upon the two individuals—not upon one, but upon two.

In a marriage commenced and based upon reasonable standards as already mentioned, there are not combinations of power which can destroy it except the power within either or both of the spouses themselves; and they must assume the responsibility generally. Other people and agencies may influence for good or bad. Financial, social, political, and other situations may seem to have a bearing; but the marriage depends first and always on the two spouses who can always make their marriage

successful and happy if they are determined, unselfish, and righteous.

The formula is simple; the ingredients are few, though there are many amplifications of each.

First, there must be the proper approach toward marriage, which contemplates the selection of a spouse who reaches as nearly as possible the pinnacle of perfection in all the matters which are of importance to the individuals. And then those two parties must come to the altar in the temple realizing that they must work hard toward this successful joint living.

Second, there must be a great unselfishness, forgetting self and directing all of the family life and all pertaining thereunto to the good of the family, subjugating self.

Third, there must be continued courting and expressions of affection, kindness, and consideration to keep love alive and growing.

Fourth, there must be a complete living of the commandments of the Lord as defined in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

With these ingredients properly mixed and continually kept functioning, it is quite impossible for unhappiness to come, misunderstandings to continue, or breaks to occur. Divorce attorneys would need to transfer to other fields and divorce courts would be padlocked.

Two individuals approaching the marriage altar must realize that to attain the happy marriage which they hope for they must know that marriage is not a legal coverall, but it means sacrifice, sharing, and even a reduction of some personal liberties. It means long, hard economizing. It means children who bring with them financial burdens, service burdens, care and worry burdens; but also it means the deepest and sweetest emotions of all.

Before marriage, each individual is quite free to go and come as he pleases, to organize and plan his life as it seems best, to make all decisions with self as the central point. Sweethearts should realize before they take the vows that each must accept literally and fully that the good of the little new family must always be superior to the good of either spouse. Each party must eliminate the “I” and the “my” and substitute therefor “we” and “our.” Every decision must take into consideration that there are two or more affected by it. As she approaches major decisions now, the wife will be concerned as to the effect they will have upon the parents, the children, the home, and their spiritual lives. The husband’s choice of occupation, his social life, his friends, his

every interest must now be considered in the light that he is only a part of a family, that the totalness of the group must be considered.

A marriage may not always be even and incidentless, but it can be one of great peace. A couple may have poverty, illness, disappointment, failures, and even death in the family, but even these will not rob them of their peace. The marriage can be a successful one so long as selfishness does not enter in. Troubles and problems will draw parents together into unbreakable unions if there is total unselfishness there. During the depression of the 1930s there was a definite drop in divorce. Poverty, failures, disappointment—they tied parents together. Adversity can cement relationships which prosperity can destroy.

The marriage that is based upon selfishness is almost certain to fail. The one who marries for wealth or the one who marries for prestige or social plane is certain to be disappointed. The one who marries to satisfy vanity and pride or who marries to spite or to show up another person is fooling only himself. But the one who marries to give happiness as well as receive it, to give service as well as to receive it, and who looks after the interests of the two and then the family as it comes will have a good chance that the marriage will be a happy one.

Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding. The mortal body would soon be emaciated and die if there were not frequent feedings. The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness.

Total unselfishness is sure to accomplish another factor in successful marriage. If one is forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other, the love found in courtship and cemented in marriage will grow into mighty proportions. Many couples permit their marriages to become stale and their love to grow cold like old bread or worn-out jokes or cold gravy. Certainly the foods most vital for love are consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness, concern, expressions of affection, embraces of appreciation, admiration, pride, companionship, confidence, faith, partnership, equality, and interdependence.

To be really happy in marriage, one must have a continued faithful observance of the commandments of the Lord. No one, single or married, was

ever sublimely happy unless he was righteous. There are temporary satisfactions and camouflaged situations for the moment, but permanent, total happiness can come only through cleanliness and worthiness. One who has a pattern of religious life with deep religious convictions can never be happy in an inactive life. The conscience will continue to afflict, unless it has been seared, in which case the marriage is already in jeopardy. A stinging conscience can make life most unbearable. Inactivity is destructive to marriage, especially where the parties are inactive in varying degrees.

Religious differences are the most trying and among the most unsolvable of all differences.

Marriage is ordained of God. It is not merely a social custom. Without proper and successful marriage, one will never be exalted. Read the words of your Lord, that it is right and proper to be married.

That being true, the thoughtful and intelligent Latter-day Saint will plan his life carefully to be sure there are no impediments placed in the way. By making one serious mistake, one may place in the way obstacles which may never be removed and which may block the way to eternal life and godhood—our ultimate destiny. If two people love the Lord more than their own lives and then love each other more than their own lives, working together in total harmony with the gospel program as their basic structure, they are sure to have this great happiness. When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste—mentally and physically—so that their whole thoughts and desires and loves are all centered in the one being, their companion, and both work together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle.

Sometimes in marriage there are other cleavings, in spite of the fact that the Lord said: “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22).

This means just as completely that “thou shalt love thy husband with all thy heart and shall cleave unto him and none else.” Frequently, people continue to cleave unto their mothers and their fathers and their chums. Sometimes mothers will not relinquish the hold they have had upon their children, and husbands as well as wives return to their mothers and fathers to obtain advice and counsel and to confide, whereas cleaving should be to the wife in most things, and all intimacies should be kept in great secrecy and privacy from others.

Couples do well to immediately find their own home, separate and apart from that of the in-laws on either side. The home may be very modest and unpretentious, but still it is an independent domicile. Your married life should become independent of her folks and his folks. You love them more than ever; you cherish their counsel; you appreciate their association; but you live your own lives, being governed by your decisions, by your own prayerful considerations after you have received the counsel from those who should give it. To cleave does not mean merely to occupy the same home; it means to adhere closely, to stick together:

“Wherefore, it is lawful that . . . they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation;

“And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made” (D&C 49:16–17).

Brothers and sisters, may I say this is the word of the Lord. It is very, very serious, and there is nobody who should argue with the Lord. He made the earth; He made the people. He knows the conditions. He set the program, and we are not intelligent enough or smart enough to be able to argue him out of these important things. He knows what is right and true.

We ask you to think of these things. Be sure that your marriage is right. Be sure that your life is right. Be sure that your part of the marriage is carried forward properly.

From the March 1977 *Ensign*, pages 3–5.

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES IN MARRIAGE

4

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or more of these suggestions.

- In the reading assignment below, Elder Lynn G. Robbins describes a “recipe for disaster.” Read his description on this page. Then develop a recipe for harmony in the home. Determine which “ingredients” you would include in such a recipe.
- Make a commitment to respond to challenges patiently and lovingly rather than angrily. Decide on something you can do that will frequently remind you of this commitment. For example, you could put a coin or other small item in your shoe or keep a note to yourself in your pocket.
- If the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106) is available, read “Resolving Conflicts in Marriage,” pages 240–41. If you are married, read and discuss this material with your spouse.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

AGENCY AND ANGER

Elder Lynn G. Robbins
Of the Seventy

Satan Stirs Up Anger in Families

“I have a family here on earth. *They are so good to me.*” This is the hope of every child, expressed in the words of one of our hymns (“Families Can Be Together Forever,” *Hymns*, no. 300; italics added).

We learn in the proclamation on the family that “the family is central to the Creator’s plan” and that “husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other” and a “sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

The family is also Satan’s primary target. He is waging war on the family. One of his schemes is the subtle and cunning way he has of sneaking behind enemy lines and entering our very homes and lives.

He damages and often destroys families within the walls of their own homes. His strategy is to stir up *anger* between family members. Satan is “the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with *anger*, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:29; italics added). The verb *stir* sounds like a recipe for disaster: Put tempers on medium heat, stir in a few choice words, and bring to a boil;

continue stirring until thick; cool off; let feelings chill for several days; serve cold; lots of leftovers.

We Can Choose Not to Become Angry

A cunning part of his strategy is to dissociate anger from agency, making us believe that we are victims of an emotion that we cannot control. We hear, “I lost my temper.” Losing one’s temper is an interesting choice of words that has become a widely used idiom. To “lose something” implies “not meaning to,” “accidental,” “involuntary,” “not responsible”—careless perhaps but “not responsible.”

“He made me mad.” This is another phrase we hear, also implying lack of control or agency. This is a myth that must be debunked. No one makes us mad. Others don’t make us angry. There is no force involved. Becoming angry is a conscious choice, a decision; therefore, we can make the choice not to become angry. *We choose!*

To those who say, “But I can’t help myself,” author William Wilbanks responds, “Nonsense.”

“Aggression, . . . suppressing the anger, talking about it, screaming and yelling,” are all learned strategies in dealing with anger. “*We choose* the one that has proved effective for us in the past. Ever notice how seldom we lose control when frustrated by our boss, but how often we do when annoyed by friends or family?” (“The New Obscenity,” *Reader’s Digest*, Dec. 1988, 24; italics added).

In his sophomore year Wilbanks tried out for the high school basketball team and made it. On the first day of practice his coach had him play one-on-one while the team observed. When he missed an easy shot, he became angry and stomped and whined. The coach walked over to him and said, "You pull a stunt like that again and you'll never play for my team." For the next three years he never lost control again. Years later, as he reflected back on this incident, he realized that the coach had taught him a life-changing principle that day: anger can be controlled (see "The New Obscenity," 24).

The Lord's Teachings

In the Joseph Smith Translation of Ephesians 4:26, Paul asks the question, "Can ye be angry, and not sin?" The Lord is very clear on this issue:

"He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:29–30).

This doctrine or command from the Lord presupposes agency and is an appeal to the conscious mind to make a decision. The Lord expects us to make the choice *not* to become angry.

Nor can becoming angry be justified. In Matthew 5, verse 22, the Lord says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother *without a cause* shall be in danger of the judgment" (italics added). How interesting that the phrase "without a cause" is not found in the inspired Joseph Smith Translation (see Matthew 5:24), nor in the 3 Nephi 12:22 version. When the Lord eliminates the phrase "without a cause," He leaves us without an excuse. "But this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:30). We can "do away" with anger, for He has so taught and commanded us.

Anger Is Yielding to Satan's Influence

Anger is a yielding to Satan's influence by surrendering our self-control. It is the thought-sin that leads to hostile feelings or behavior. It is the detona-

tor of road rage on the freeway, flare-ups in the sports arena, and domestic violence in homes.

Unchecked, anger can quickly trigger an explosion of cruel words and other forms of emotional abuse that can scar a tender heart. It is "that which cometh out of the mouth," the Savior said; "this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11).

David O. McKay said, "Let husband and wife never speak in loud tones to each other, 'Unless the house is on fire'" (*Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay [1971], 294).

Physical abuse is anger gone berserk and is never justified and always unrighteous.

Anger is an uncivil attempt to make another feel guilty or a cruel way of trying to correct them. It is often mislabeled as discipline but is almost always counterproductive. Therefore the scriptural warnings: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them," and "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:19, 21).

"I Will Never Become Angry Again"

Choice and accountability are inseparable principles. Because anger is a choice, there is a strong warning in the proclamation "that individuals . . . who abuse spouse or offspring . . . will one day stand accountable before God."

Understanding the connection between agency and anger is the first step in eliminating anger from our lives. We can choose not to become angry. And we can make that choice today, right now: "I will never become angry again." Ponder this resolution.

The 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants is one of our best sources to learn correct leadership principles. Perhaps the most important application of section 121 is to spouses and parents. We are to lead our families by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness, kindness, and meekness, and by love unfeigned (see D&C 121:41–42).

May each child's dream of having a family here on earth that is good to them come true.

From an address by Elder Robbins in the April 1998 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 105–6; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 80–81).

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES THROUGH POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

5

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- In the reading assignment below, Elder Joe J. Christensen observes: “Few people have ever changed for the better as a result of constant criticism or nagging. If we are not careful, some of what we offer as *constructive* criticism is actually *destructive*. At times, it is better to leave some things unsaid” (see page 19). In the coming week, give close attention to the things you think and say about others. Make an effort to be kind and edifying in everything you say.
- Look for the admirable qualities in your spouse. Make a list of these qualities, and share it with your spouse.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

MARRIAGE AND THE GREAT PLAN OF HAPPINESS

Elder Joe J. Christensen
Of the Seventy

Barbara and I have been blessed with six children. Some years ago, when we had taken all of them to visit with their grandparents, my father said, “Joe, I think you and Barbara have started something you can’t stop.”

At this Easter season we declare to all the world that Jesus is the Christ and that through His holy priesthood and its sealing power, marriages and families need never stop—need never come to an end.

Today I would like to speak to all of you about our marriages. Here are eight practical suggestions that, hopefully, may be of value in strengthening our marriages, now and in the future.

Remember the Importance of Marriage

1. Remember the central importance of your marriage. Listen to these words from Elder Bruce R. McConkie on the importance of marriage in our Father in Heaven’s “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8):

“From the moment of birth into mortality to the time we are married in the temple, everything we have in the whole gospel system is to prepare and qualify us to enter that holy order of matrimony

which makes us husband and wife in this life and in the world to come. . . .

“There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units” (“Salvation Is a Family Affair,” *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 43–44).

Pray for the Success of Your Marriage

2. Pray for the success of your marriage. Years ago, when it was common for a General Authority to tour a mission and interview all the missionaries, Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was visiting with an elder who was just about to finish his mission.

“When you get released, Elder, what are your plans?”

“Oh, I plan to go back to college.” And then with a smile he added, “Then I hope to fall in love and get married.”

Elder Kimball shared this wise counsel: “Well, don’t just pray to marry the one you love. *Instead, pray to love the one you marry.*”

We should pray to become more kind, courteous, humble, patient, forgiving, and, *especially*, less selfish.

In order to recognize our personal problems or weaknesses which hinder us from being better marriage partners, we should come to the Lord in prayer and reap the benefits of this powerful Book of Mormon promise: “If men come unto me I will

show unto them their weakness . . . ; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

And so the need to pray. Many Church leaders and marriage counselors indicate that they have not seen one marriage in serious trouble where the couple was still praying together daily. When problems arise and marriages are threatened, praying together as a couple may be the most important remedy.

Listen to Your Spouse

3. Listen. Make the time to listen to your spouse; even schedule it regularly. Visit with each other and assess how you are doing as a marriage partner.

Brother Brent Barlow posed a question to a group of priesthood brethren: "How many of you would like to receive a revelation?" Every hand went up. He then suggested that they all go home and ask their wives how they could be better husbands. He added, "I followed my own advice, and had a very informative discussion with [my wife] Susan for more than an hour that afternoon!" ("To Build a Better Marriage," *Ensign*, Sept. 1992, 7). A conversation like that could be a revelation for any of us.

Have any of you brethren ever had your wife say something like I heard recently: "Joe, are you listening?" She wasn't the only one who wondered if I was listening. Some time ago I was taking a nap and our little granddaughter Allison came and lifted up one of my eyelids and said, "Grandpa, are you in there?" We should be "in there" and responsive to our mate.

Avoid Ceaseless Pinpricking

4. Avoid "ceaseless pinpricking." Don't be too critical of each other's faults. Recognize that none of us is perfect. We all have a long way to go to become as Christlike as our leaders have urged us to become.

"Ceaseless pinpricking," as President Spencer W. Kimball called it, can deflate almost any marriage ("Marriage and Divorce," *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [1977], 148). Generally each of us is painfully aware of our weaknesses, and we don't need frequent reminders. Few people have ever changed for the better as a result of constant criticism or nagging. If we are not careful, some of what we offer as *constructive* criticism is actually *destructive*.

At times it is better to leave some things unsaid. As a newlywed, Sister Lola Walters read in a magazine that in order to strengthen a marriage, couples should have regular, candid sharing sessions in

which they would list any mannerisms they found to be annoying. She wrote:

"We were to name five things we found annoying, and I started off. . . . I told him that I didn't like the way he ate grapefruit. He peeled it and ate it like an orange! Nobody else I knew ate grapefruit like that. Could a girl be expected to spend a lifetime, and even eternity, watching her husband eat grapefruit like an orange? . . .

"After I finished [with my five], it was his turn to tell the things he disliked about me. [He] said, 'Well, to tell the truth, I can't think of anything I don't like about you, Honey.'

"Gasp.

"I quickly turned my back, because I didn't know how to explain the tears that had filled my eyes and were running down my face."

Sister Walters concluded, "Whenever I hear of married couples being incompatible, I always wonder if they are suffering from what I now call the Grapefruit Syndrome" ("The Grapefruit Syndrome," *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, 13).

Yes, at times, it is better to leave some things unsaid.

Keep Your Courtship Alive

5. Keep your courtship alive. Make time to do things together—just the two of you. As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling.

It doesn't need to be costly. The time together is the most important element.

Once when my father-in-law was leaving the house after lunch to return to the field to work, my mother-in-law said, "Albert, you get right back in here and tell me you love me." He grinned and jokingly said, "Elsie, when we were married, I told you I loved you, and if that ever changes, I'll let you know." It's hard to overuse the expression "I love you." Use it daily.

Be Quick to Say, "I'm Sorry"

6. Be quick to say, "I'm sorry." As hard as it is to form the words, be swift to say, "I apologize, and please forgive me," even though you are not the one who is totally at fault. True love is developed by those who are willing to readily admit personal mistakes and offenses.

When differences do arise, being able to discuss and resolve them is important, but there are instances

when it is best to take a time-out. Biting your tongue and counting to ten or even a hundred is important. And occasionally, even letting the sun go down on your wrath can help bring you back to the problem in the morning more rested, calm, and with a better chance for resolution.

Occasionally we hear something like, “Why, we have been married for fifty years, and we have never had a difference of opinion.” If that is literally the case, then one of the partners is overly dominated by the other or, as someone said, is a stranger to the truth. Any intelligent couple will have differences of opinion. Our challenge is to be sure that we know how to resolve them. That is part of the process of making a good marriage better.

Live within Your Means

7. Learn to live within your means. Some of the most difficult challenges in marriage arise in the area of finances. “The American Bar Association . . . indicated that 89 percent of all divorces could be traced to quarrels and accusations over money” (Marvin J. Ashton, “One for the Money,” *Ensign*, July 1975, 72). Be willing to postpone or forgo some purchases in order to stay within your budget. Pay your tithing first, and avoid debt insofar as possible. Remember that spending fifty dollars a month less than you receive equals happiness and spending fifty more equals misery. The time may have come to get out the scissors and your credit cards and perform what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland called some “plastic surgery” (“Things We Have Learned—Together,” *Ensign*, June 1986, 30).

Share Home and Family Responsibilities

8. Be a true partner in home and family responsibilities. Don’t be like the husband who sits around home expecting to be waited on, feeling that earning the living is his chore and that his wife alone is responsible for the house and taking care of the children. The task of caring for home and family is more than one person’s responsibility.

Remember that you are in this partnership together. Barbara and I have discovered that we can make our bed every morning in less than a minute and it’s done for the day. She says that she lets me do it to help me feel good about myself all day, and I guess there may be something to that.

Find time to study the scriptures together, and follow this sound counsel from President Kimball: “When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste, mentally and physically, . . . and both are working together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle” (*Marriage and Divorce* [1976], 24).

In summary:

- Remember the central importance of your marriage.
- Pray for its success.
- Listen.
- Avoid “ceaseless pinpricking.”
- Keep your courtship alive.
- Be quick to say, “I’m sorry.”
- Learn to live within your means.
- Be a true partner in home and family responsibilities.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, that the tomb was empty on that third day, and that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Thus with gratitude for the sealing power within the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we can confidently say with the poet, “I shall but love thee better after death” (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, no. 43, line 14).

From an address by Elder Christensen in the April 1995 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 84–87; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 64–66).

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES THROUGH FAITH AND PRAYER

6

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Decide on one thing you can do to strengthen your faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
- Establish a time each day to pray with your spouse.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

FINDING JOY IN LIFE

Elder Richard G. Scott
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Variety amid Constancy

Recently I stood on the north shore of a beautiful Pacific island gazing out to sea at daybreak. I was fascinated by the regularity with which the gigantic waves consistently moved forward to break on the shoreline. It reminded me of the constancy of the plan of the Lord, with its fixed, eternal law, and the security of enduring justice and the tenderness of mercy when earned by obedience. I noticed that each wave would crest at a different point on the horizon to find its unique path to shore. Some cascaded over rocks, leaving rivulets of foaming, white water. Others burst on the shore in individual patterns. They slid up the moistened sand with playful frothy edges, then bubbled and swirled as they receded.

I thought of the unending variety of possibilities the Lord has provided for us. We have so much freedom, so many opportunities to develop our unique personalities and talents, our individual memories, our personalized contributions. Since there would be no further opportunity to observe the majestic sea, I tried to imagine the glorious panorama the brilliant sun would later create. As I watched this magnificent scene in reverence, a window formed in the clouds; the glistening rays of the rising sun broke through the overcast sky, transforming everything with its luminescence, its color, its life. It was as if the Lord wanted to share an additional blessing, a symbol of the light of His teachings that gives brilliance and hope to everyone it touches. Tears of gratitude formed for this wondrous world in

which we live, for the extraordinary beauty our Heavenly Father so freely shares with all who are willing to see. Truly, life is beautiful.

Appreciate the Beauty of Life

Do you take time to discover each day how beautiful your life can be? How long has it been since you watched the sun set—the departing rays kissing the clouds, trees, hills, and lowlands good night, sometimes tranquilly, sometimes with exuberant bursts of color and form?

What of the wonder of a cloudless night when the Lord unveils the marvels of His heavens—the twinkling stars, the moonlight rays—to ignite our imagination with His greatness and glory?

How captivating to watch a seed planted in fertile soil germinate, gather strength, and send forth a tiny, seemingly insignificant sprout. Patiently it begins to grow and develop its own character, led by the genetic code the Lord has provided to guide its development. With care it surely will become what it is destined to be: a lily, crowned with grace and beauty; a fragrant spearmint plant; a peach; an avocado; or a beautiful blossom with unique delicacy, hue, and fragrance.

When last did you observe a tiny rosebud form? Each day it develops new and impressive character, more promise of beauty until it becomes a majestic rose.

You are one of the noblest of God's creations. His intent is that your life be gloriously beautiful regardless of your circumstances. As you are grateful and obedient, you can become all that God intends you to be.

Joy in Life Depends on Trust in God

Sadness, disappointment, and severe challenge are *events* in life, not life itself. I do not minimize how hard some of these events are. They can extend over a long period of time, but they should not be allowed to become the confining center of everything you do. The Lord inspired Lehi to declare the fundamental truth, "Men are, that they might have joy."¹ That is a conditional statement: "they *might* have joy." It is not conditional for the Lord. His intent is that each of us finds joy. It will not be conditional for you as you obey the commandments, have faith in the Master, and do the things that are necessary to have joy here on earth.

Your joy in life depends upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His holy Son, your conviction that their plan of happiness truly can bring you joy. Pondering their doctrine will let you enjoy the beauties of this earth and enrich your relationships with others. It will lead you to the comforting, strengthening experiences that flow from prayer to Father in Heaven and the answers He gives in return.

Perspective and Patience

A pebble held close to the eye appears to be a gigantic obstacle. Cast on the ground, it is seen in perspective. Likewise, problems or trials in our lives need to be viewed in the perspective of scriptural doctrine. Otherwise they can easily overtake our vision, absorb our energy, and deprive us of the joy and beauty the Lord intends us to receive here on earth. Some people are like rocks thrown into a sea of problems. They are drowned by them. Be a cork. When submerged in a problem, fight to be free to bob up to serve again with happiness.

You are here on earth for a divine purpose. It is not to be endlessly entertained or to be constantly in full pursuit of pleasure. You are here to be tried, to prove yourself so that you can receive the additional blessings God has for you.² The tempering effect of patience is required.³ Some blessings will be delivered here in this life; others will come beyond the veil.

The Lord is intent on your personal growth and development. That progress is accelerated when you willingly allow Him to lead you through every growth experience you encounter, whether initially it be to your individual liking or not. When you trust in the Lord, when you are willing to let your heart and your mind be centered in His will, when you ask to be led by the Spirit to do His will, you are assured of the greatest happiness along the way and the most fulfilling attainment from this mortal experience. If you question everything you are asked to

do, or dig in your heels at every unpleasant challenge, you make it harder for the Lord to bless you.⁴

Your agency, the right to make choices, is not given so that you can get what you want. This divine gift is provided so that you will choose what your Father in Heaven wants for you. That way He can lead you to become all that He intends you to be.⁵ That path leads to glorious joy and happiness.

Live with Joy amid Adversity

Learn from inspiring individuals who have made peace with their challenges and live with joy amid adversity. A lovely woman with an aggressive terminal disease consistently found joy in life. She understood the plan of happiness, had received the temple ordinances, and was doing her best to qualify for the promised blessings. Her personal journal records:

"It is a beautiful fall day. I picked up the mail and sat down on the swing. I was so happy and content in the warm sun, the sweet smell of nature and the trees around me. I just sat and gloried in the fact that I am still alive on this beautiful earth. . . . The Lord is so good to me. How I thank him that I am still here and feeling so good. I am soooooo happy I just want to shout and dance through this beautiful house as the sun streams into the big windows. I love being alive."

A valiant mother courageously fighting a debilitating illness spent untold hours laboriously completing a large, challenging needlepoint work of art. It was a gift to a couple experiencing trials. For the couple it is a priceless treasure, a constant reminder of the precious fruits of resolute effort in the face of adversity, an enduring message of hope bound in the bonds of pure love and willing sacrifice.

Find Joy in What You Do Have

Children teach us how to find joy even under the most challenging circumstances. Children haven't yet learned to be depressed by concentrating on the things they don't have. They find joy in what is available to them. I remember a small boy playing along a riverbank. He had tied a piece of fishing line to the ends of two discarded soft-drink cans. He threw one can over a limb, then filled it with water. He would pull on the other can, then let it go. The weight of the first can would draw the second one up as it fell. He laughed and danced with glee.

Simple, rejuvenating experiences surround us. They can be safety valves to keep the tension down and the spirit up. Don't concentrate on what you don't have or have lost. The Lord promised the obedient to share all that He possesses with them.

You may temporarily lack here, but in the next life, if you prove yourself worthy by living valiantly, a fulness will be your blessing.

Find the compensatory blessings in your life when, in the wisdom of the Lord, He deprives you of something you very much want. To the sightless or hearing impaired, He sharpens the other senses. To the ill, He gives patience, understanding, and increased appreciation for others' kindness. With the loss of a dear one, He deepens the bonds of love, enriches memories, and kindles hope in a future reunion. You will discover compensatory blessings when you willingly accept the will of the Lord and exercise faith in Him.⁶

To the afflicted people of Alma, the Lord said:

"I will also ease the burdens . . . that even you cannot feel them upon your backs . . . ; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

"And . . . the burdens . . . were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord."⁷

Being Creative Will Help You Enjoy Life

Attempt to be creative for the joy it brings. After their noble husbands were called home, Sisters Camilla Kimball, Amelia McConkie, and Helen Richards learned to paint. They not only leave legacies of art, but they will never see a sunset, a face, or a tree the same again. They now perceive subtle nuances of color and form and rejoice in the abounding beauty around them.

Select something like music, dance, sculpture, or poetry. Being creative will help you enjoy life. It engenders a spirit of gratitude. It develops latent talent, sharpens your capacity to reason, to act, and to find purpose in life. It dispels loneliness and heartache. It gives a renewal, a spark of enthusiasm, and zest for life.

Service: A Key to Happiness

Willing service to others is a key to enduring happiness. President Spencer W. Kimball said: "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other."⁸

I know of a woman who was joyously happy. Each morning she would ask her Father in Heaven to lead her to someone she could help. That sincere prayer was answered time and again. The burdens of many were eased and their lives brightened. She was

blessed continually for being an instrument directed by the Lord.

Difficulty Can Be Turned to Growth

I know that every difficulty we face in life, even those that come from our own negligence or even transgression, can be turned by the Lord into growth experiences, a virtual ladder upward.⁹ I certainly do not recommend transgression as a path to growth. It is painful, difficult, and so totally unnecessary. It is far wiser and so much easier to move forward in righteousness. But through proper repentance, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to His commandments, even the disappointment that comes from transgression can be converted into a return to happiness.

Make a list of things you can do for happiness, such as:

- Ponder the scriptures to understand the plan of happiness.
- Pray with faith in Jesus Christ.
- Love and serve others.
- Receive the temple ordinances. Return to bless others.
- Listen to the prophet and obey his counsel.
- Be grateful for what you have.
- Smile more.

Your list will provide keys to contentment and joy.

Challenge Is Temporary but Happiness Is Eternal

A famous Brazilian song repeats a falsehood many believe: Sadness never ends, but happiness does. I witness that with faith in the Savior and obedience to His teachings, happiness never ends, but sadness does.

No matter how difficult something you or a loved one faces, it should not take over your life and be the center of all your interest. Challenges are growth experiences, temporary scenes to be played out on the background of a pleasant life. Don't become so absorbed in a single event that you can't think of anything else or care for yourself or for those who depend upon you. Remember, much like the mending of the body, the healing of some spiritual and emotional challenges takes time.

The Lord has said, "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days."¹⁰ As you are patient, you will come to understand what the statement "I am with thee" means. God's love brings peace and joy.

Your faith in Jesus Christ gives life enduring meaning. Remember you are on a journey to exaltation. Sometimes you have experiences that yield more happiness than others, but it all has purpose with the Lord.¹¹

As a witness of the Savior, I exhort you to forgive any you feel may have offended you. If there is transgression, repent of it, that the Master may heal you.

Thank your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son for the plan of happiness and the gospel prin-

ciples upon which it is based. Be grateful for the ordinances and the covenants they have provided. I solemnly testify they have power to crown your life with peace and joy, to give it purpose and meaning. You will learn that sadness and disappointment are temporary. Happiness is everlastingly eternal because of Jesus Christ. I solemnly witness that He lives, that He loves you, and that He will help you.

From an address by Elder Scott in the April 1996 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 31–35; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 24–26).

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:25.
2. See Abraham 3:25.
3. See Mosiah 3:19.
4. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–32.
6. See Orson F. Whitney, quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 98.
7. Mosiah 24:14–15.
8. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
9. See Isaiah 40:31.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 24:8.
11. See Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 177.

THE HEALING POWER OF FORGIVENESS

7

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Study the examples of forgiveness in the following scripture passages: Luke 23:33–34; Acts 7:58–60; 1 Nephi 7:8–21.
- Make a commitment to be more forgiving and more worthy of the forgiveness of others.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

“OF YOU IT IS REQUIRED TO FORGIVE”

President Gordon B. Hinckley
First Counselor in the First Presidency

A spirit of forgiveness and an attitude of love and compassion toward those who may have wronged us is of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each of us has need of this spirit. The whole world has need of it. The Lord taught it. He exemplified it as none other has exemplified it.

In the time of His agony on the cross of Calvary, with vile and hateful accusers before Him, those who had brought Him to this terrible crucifixion, He cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

None of us is called on to forgive so generously, but each of us is under a divinely spoken obligation to reach out with pardon and mercy. The Lord has declared in words of revelation: “My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

“Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

“I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

“And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds” (D&C 64:8–11).

How much we need application of this God-given principle and its companion principle, repentance!

We see the need for it in the homes of the people, where tiny molehills of misunderstanding are fanned into mountains of argument. We see it among neighbors, where insignificant differences lead to undying bitterness. We see it in business associates who quarrel and refuse to compromise and forgive when, in most instances, if there were a willingness to sit down together and speak quietly one to another, the matter could be resolved to the blessing of all. Rather, they spend their days nurturing grudges and planning retribution.

In that first year of the organization of the Church, when the Prophet Joseph Smith was repeatedly arrested and tried on false charges by those who sought to injure him, the Lord said to him through revelation, “Whosoever shall go to law with thee shall be cursed by the law” (D&C 24:17). I have seen that in our time among some of those who have vindictively pursued their nurtured grudges. Even among some of those who win their contests there appears to be little peace of mind, and while they may have gained dollars, they have lost something more precious.

Avoid Bitterness

Guy de Maupassant, the French writer, tells the story of a peasant named Hauchecome who came on market day to the village. While walking through the public square, his eye caught sight of a piece of string lying on the cobblestones. He picked it up and put it in his pocket. His actions were observed by the village harness maker, with whom he had previously had a dispute.

Later in the day the loss of a purse was reported. Hauchecome was arrested on the accusation of

the harness maker. He was taken before the mayor, to whom he protested his innocence, showing the piece of string that he had picked up. But he was not believed and was laughed at.

The next day the purse was found, and Hauchecome was absolved of any wrongdoing. But, resentful of the indignity he had suffered because of a false accusation, he became embittered and would not let the matter die. Unwilling to forgive and forget, he thought and talked of little else. He neglected his farm. Everywhere he went, everyone he met had to be told of the injustice. By day and by night he brooded over it. Obsessed with his grievance, he became desperately ill and died. In the delirium of his death struggles, he repeatedly murmured, "A piece of string, a piece of string" (*The Works of Guy de Maupassant* [n.d.], 34–38).

With variations of characters and circumstances, that story could be repeated many times in our own day. How difficult it is for any of us to forgive those who have injured us. We are all prone to brood on the evil done us. That brooding becomes as a gnawing and destructive canker. Is there a virtue more in need of application in our time than the virtue of forgiving and forgetting? There are those who would look upon this as a sign of weakness. Is it? I submit that it takes neither strength nor intelligence to brood in anger over wrongs suffered, to go through life with a spirit of vindictiveness, to dissipate one's abilities in planning retribution. There is no peace in the nursing of a grudge. There is no happiness in living for the day when you can "get even."

Paul speaks of "the weak and beggarly elements" of our lives (see Galatians 4:9). Is there anything more weak or beggarly than the disposition to wear out one's life in an unending round of bitter thoughts and scheming gestures toward those who may have affronted us?

Joseph F. Smith presided over the Church at a time of great bitterness toward our people. He was the target of vile accusations, of a veritable drumbeat of criticism by editorial writers even in his own community. He was lampooned, cartooned, and ridiculed. Listen to his response to those who made sport of demeaning him: "Let them alone. Let them go. Give them the liberty of speech they want. Let them tell their own story, and write their own doom" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 339). And then, with an outreaching spirit of forgiving and forgetting, he went ahead with the great and positive work of leading the Church forward to new growth and remarkable accomplishments. At the time of his death, many of those who had ridiculed him wrote tributes of praise concerning him.

I recall listening at length to a couple who sat across the desk from me. There was bitterness between them. I know that at one time their love was deep and true. But each had developed a habit of speaking of the faults of the other. Unwilling to forgive the kind of mistakes we all make, and unwilling to forget them and live above them with forbearance, they had carped at one another until the love they once knew had been smothered. It had turned to ashes with the decree of a so-called "no-fault" divorce. Now there is only loneliness and recrimination. I am satisfied that had there been even a small measure of repentance and forgiveness, they would still be together, enjoying the companionship that had so richly blessed their earlier years.

Peace through Forgiveness

If there be any who nurture in their hearts the poisonous brew of enmity toward another, I plead with you to ask the Lord for strength to forgive. This expression of desire will be of the very substance of your repentance. It may not be easy, and it may not come quickly. But if you will seek it with sincerity and cultivate it, it *will* come. And even though he whom you have forgiven continues to pursue and threaten you, you will know you have done what you could to effect a reconciliation. There will come into your heart a peace otherwise unattainable. That peace will be the peace of Him who said:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14–15).

Prodigal Son

I know of no more beautiful story in all literature than that found in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. It is the story of a repentant son and a forgiving father. It is the story of a son who wasted his inheritance in riotous living, rejecting his father's counsel, spurning those who loved him. When he had spent all, he was hungry and friendless, and "when he came to himself" (Luke 15:17), he turned back to his father, who, on seeing him afar off, "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

I ask you to read that story. Every parent ought to read it again and again. It is large enough to encompass every household, and enough larger than that to encompass all mankind, for are we not all prodigal sons and daughters who need to repent and partake of the forgiving mercy of our Heavenly Father and then follow His example?

His Beloved Son, our Redeemer, reaches out to us in forgiveness and mercy, but in so doing He commands repentance. A true and magnanimous spirit of forgiveness will become an expression of that required repentance. Said the Lord—and I quote from a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph:

“Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit. . . .

“Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me” (D&C 19:15–18, 23).

Such is the commandment, and such is the promise of Him who, in His great exemplary prayer, pleaded, “Father, . . . forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:9, 12).

“Bind Up . . . Wounds”

Are not the words of Abraham Lincoln beautiful which he spoke out of the tragedy of a terrible civil war: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, . . . let us . . . bind up the . . . wounds” (in John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations* [1968], 640).

My brothers and sisters, let us bind up the wounds—oh, the many wounds that have been caused by cutting words, by stubbornly cultivated grievances, by scheming plans to “get even” with those who may have wronged us. We all have a little of this spirit of revenge in us. Fortunately, we all have the power to rise above it, if we will “clothe [ourselves] with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace” (D&C 88:125).

“To err is human, to forgive divine” (Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, 2:1711). There is no peace in reflecting on the pain of old wounds. There is peace only in repentance and forgiveness. This is the sweet peace of the Christ, who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

From the June 1991 *Ensign*, pages 2–5.

MANAGING FAMILY FINANCES

8

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Make a list of items you have recently purchased. Write the letter *N* next to each item that you needed. Write the letter *W* next to each item that you wanted but did not need. Use this list to evaluate your spending habits. If you are spending too much money on things that are unnecessary, consider ways to use your money more wisely.
- With your spouse, develop a budget for an upcoming period of time—perhaps one or two weeks. Consider using the sample on page 32 as a guide. Work together to live within the budget you have set.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

CONSTANCY AMID CHANGE

President N. Eldon Tanner
First Counselor in the First Presidency

What I would like to share with you today are my observations about the constant and fundamental principles which, if followed, will bring financial security and peace of mind under *any* economic circumstances.

“Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God”

First, I would like to build a foundation and establish a perspective within which these economic principles must be applied.

One day a grandson of mine said to me: “I have observed you and other successful men, and I have made up my mind that I want to be a success in my life. I want to interview as many successful people as I can to determine what made them successful. So looking back over your experience, Grandpa, what do you believe is the most important element of success?”

I told him that the Lord gave the greatest success formula that I know of: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Some argue that some men prosper financially who do *not* seek the kingdom first. This is true. But the Lord is not promising us just material wealth if

we seek first the kingdom. From my own experience I know this is not the case. In the words of Henrik Ibsen: “Money may be the husk of many things, but not the kernel. It brings you food, but not appetite; medicine, but not health; acquaintances, but not friends; servants, but not faithfulness; days of joy, but not peace or happiness” (in *The Forbes Scrapbook of Thoughts on the Business of Life* [1968], 88).

Material blessings are a part of the gospel if they are achieved in the proper way and for the right purpose. I am reminded of an experience of President Hugh B. Brown. As a young soldier in World War I, he was visiting an elderly friend in the hospital. This friend was a millionaire several times over who, at the age of eighty, was lying at death’s door. Neither his divorced wife nor any of his five children cared enough to come to the hospital to see him. As President Brown thought of the things his friend “had lost which money could not buy and noted his tragic situation and the depth of his misery,” he asked his friend how he would change the course of his life if he had it to live over again.

The old gentleman, who died a few days later, said: “‘As I think back over life the most important and valuable asset which I might have had but which I lost in the process of accumulating my millions, was the simple faith my mother had in God and in the immortality of the soul.

“ ‘ . . . You asked me what is the most valuable thing in life. I cannot answer you in better words than those used by the poet.’ ” He asked President

Brown to get a little book out of his briefcase from which he read a poem entitled “I’m an Alien.”

I’m an alien, to the faith my mother taught me.
I’m a stranger to the God that heard my mother
when she cried.
I’m an alien to the comfort that, “Now I lay me,”
brought me.
To the everlasting arms that held my father
when he died.
When the great world came and called me,
I deserted all to follow.
Never noting in my blindness I had slipped
my hand from His.
Never dreaming in my dazedness that the bubble
fame is hollow.
That the wealth of gold is tinsel, as I since have
learned it is.
I have spent a lifetime seeking things I spurned
when I found them,
I have fought and been rewarded in many a
winning cause,
But I’d give it *all*, fame and fortune and the
pleasures that surround them,
If I only had the *faith* that made my mother
what she was.

“That was the dying testimony of a man who was born in the Church but had drifted far from it. That was the brokenhearted cry of a lonely man who could have anything money could buy, but who had lost the most important things of life in order to accumulate this world’s goods” (*Continuing the Quest* [1961], 32–35; italics added).

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob gives us some important counsel on this matter:

“But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

“And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, *if ye seek them*; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted” (Jacob 2:18–19; italics added).

The foundation and perspective then are these: We must first seek the kingdom, work and plan and spend wisely, plan for the future, and use what wealth we are blessed with to help build up that kingdom. When guided by this eternal perspective and by building on this firm foundation, we can pursue with confidence our daily tasks and our life’s work, which must be carefully planned and diligently pursued.

It is within this framework that I would like to explain five principles of economic constancy.

Pay an Honest Tithe

Constancy #1: Pay an honest tithing. I often wonder if we realize that paying our tithing does not represent giving gifts to the Lord and the Church. Paying tithing is discharging a debt to the Lord. The Lord is the source of all our blessings, including life itself.

The payment of tithing is a commandment, a commandment with a promise. If we obey this commandment, we are promised that we will “prosper in the land.” This prosperity consists of more than material goods—it may include enjoying good health and vigor of mind. It includes family solidarity and spiritual increase. I hope those of you not presently paying your full tithe will seek the faith and strength to do so. As you discharge this obligation to your Maker, you will find great, great happiness, the like of which is known only by those who are faithful to this commandment.

Live Frugally

Constancy #2: Live on less than you earn. I have discovered that there is no way that you can ever earn *more* than you can spend. I am convinced that it is not the amount of money an individual earns that brings peace of mind as much as it is having *control* of his money. Money can be an obedient servant but a harsh taskmaster. Those who structure their standard of living to allow a little surplus, control their circumstances. Those who spend a little more than they earn are controlled by their circumstances. They are in bondage. President Heber J. Grant once said: “If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet” (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111).

The key to spending less than we earn is simple—it is called discipline. Whether early in life or late, we must all eventually learn to discipline ourselves, our appetites, and our economic desires. How blessed is he who learns to spend less than he earns and puts something away for a rainy day.

Distinguish Needs and Wants

Constancy #3: Learn to distinguish between needs and wants. Consumer appetites are man-made. Our competitive free enterprise system produces unlimited goods and services to stimulate our desire to want more convenience and luxuries. I do not criticize the system or the availability of these goods or services. I am only concerned about our people using sound judgment in their purchases. We must learn that sacrifice is a vital part of our eternal discipline.

In this and many other countries, many parents and children born since World War II have known only prosperous conditions. Many have been conditioned to instant gratification. There have been ample job opportunities for all who are capable of working. Yesterday's luxuries for most are considered today's necessities.

This is typified by young couples who expect to furnish their homes and provide themselves with luxuries as they *begin* their marriages, which their parents have managed to acquire only after many years of struggle and sacrifice. By wanting too much too soon, young couples may succumb to easy credit plans, thereby plunging themselves into debt. This would keep them from having the financial means necessary to do as the Church suggests in the matter of food storage and other security programs.

Overindulgence and poor money management place a heavy strain on marriage relationships. Most marital problems, it seems, originate from economic roots—either insufficient income to sustain the family or mismanagement of the income as earned.

One young father came to his bishop for financial counseling and told an all-too-frequent story: "Bishop, I have been well trained as an engineer, and I earn a good salary. It seems that all through school I was taught how to make money, but no one taught me how to manage money."

While we believe it is desirable for every student to take classes in consumer education, the primary training rests with the parents. Parents cannot leave this vital training to chance or transfer the responsibility entirely to our public schools and universities.

An important part of this training should be to explain debt. For most of us there are two kinds of financial debt—consumer debt and investment or business debt. Consumer debt refers to buying on credit those things we use or consume in daily living. Examples would include installment buying of clothes, appliances, furniture, etc. Consumer debt is secured by mortgaging our future earnings. This can be very dangerous. If we are laid off work, disabled, or encounter serious emergencies, we have difficulties meeting our obligations. Installment buying is the most expensive way to purchase. To the cost of the goods we buy must be added heavy interest and handling charges.

I realize that young families find it necessary at times to purchase on credit. But we caution you not to buy more than is truly necessary and to pay off your debts as quickly as possible. When money is tight, avoid the extra burden of additional interest charges.

Investment debt should be fully secured so as not to encumber a family's security. Don't invest in speculative ventures. The spirit of speculation can become intoxicating. Many fortunes have been wiped out by the uncontrolled appetite to accumulate more and more. Let us learn from the sorrows of the past and avoid enslaving our time, energy, and general health to a gluttonous appetite to acquire increased material goods.

President Spencer W. Kimball has given this thought-provoking counsel:

"The Lord has blessed us as a people with a prosperity unequalled in times past. The resources that have been placed in our power are good, and necessary to our work here on the earth. But I am afraid that many of us have been surfeited with flocks and herds and acres and barns and wealth and have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have power over us. Do we have more of these good things than our faith can stand? Many people spend most of their time working in the service of a self-image that includes sufficient money, stocks, bonds, investment portfolios, property, credit cards, furnishings, automobiles, and the like to *guarantee* carnal security throughout, it is hoped, a long and happy life. Forgotten is the fact that our assignment is to use these many resources in our families and quorums to build up the kingdom of God" ("The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, 4).

By way of testimony, may I add this to President Kimball's statement. I know of no situation where happiness and peace of mind have increased with the amassing of property beyond the reasonable wants and needs of the family.

Budget Wisely

Constancy #4: Develop and live within a budget.
A friend of mine has a daughter who went overseas with a BYU study-abroad program for a semester. She was constantly writing home for more money. His concern was such that he called her long-distance and questioned her about the need for the additional funds. At one point in the conversation the daughter explained, "But Dad, I can tell you where every penny you have sent me has been spent."

He replied, "You don't seem to get the point. I'm interested in a budget—a plan for spending—not in a diary of where the money has gone."

Perhaps parents should be more like the father of the college boy who wired home, "No mon, no fun, your son." His father wired back, "How sad, too bad, your dad."

It has been my observation in interviewing many people through the years that far too many people do not have a workable budget and have not disciplined themselves to abide by its provisions. Many people think a budget robs them of their freedom. On the contrary, successful people have learned that a budget makes real economic freedom possible.

Budgeting and financial management need not be overly complicated or time-consuming. The story is told of an immigrant father who kept his accounts payable in a shoe box, his accounts receivable on a spindle, and his cash in the cash register.

"I don't see how you can run your business this way," said his son. "How do you know what your profit is?"

"Son," replied the businessman, "when I got off the boat, I had only the pants I was wearing. Today your sister is an art teacher, your brother is a doctor, and you're an accountant. I have a car, a home, and a good business. Everything is paid for. So you add it all up, subtract the pants, and there's my profit."

Wise financial counselors teach that there are four different elements to any good budget. Provision should be made *first* for basic operating needs such as food, clothing, etc.; *second*, for home equity; *third*, for emergency needs such as savings, health insurance, and life insurance; and, *fourth*, for wise investment and a storage program for the future.

May I comment on two of these elements. Nothing seems so certain as the unexpected in our lives. With rising medical costs, health insurance is the only way most families can meet serious

accident, illness, or maternity costs, particularly those for premature births. Life insurance provides income continuation when the provider prematurely dies. Every family should make provision for proper health and life insurance.

After these basics are met, we should by frugal management regularly save to create funds for investment. It has been my observation that few people have been successful with investments who have not first developed the habit of saving regularly. This requires discipline and discriminating judgment. There are many ways to invest. My only advice is to choose wisely your investment counselors. Be sure they merit your confidence by maintaining a successful investment record.

Be Honest

Constancy #5: Be honest in all your financial affairs. The ideal of integrity will never go out of style. It applies to all we do. As leaders and members of the Church, we should be the epitome of integrity.

Brothers and sisters, through these five principles, I have tried to sketch what might be characterized as the true pattern of financial and resource management.

I hope that each of us may benefit from their application. I bear my witness that they are true and that this Church and the work we are engaged in are true.

From an address by President Tanner in the general welfare session of the October 1979 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 117–21; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 80–82).

Budget from _____ **to** _____
date date

INCOME	PLANNED	ACTUAL
Wages or salary after taxes		
Other income		
Total income		
EXPENDITURES	PLANNED	ACTUAL
Tithing		
Other Church donations		
Long-term savings		
Savings for emergencies		
Food		
Mortgage or rent		
Utilities		
Transportation		
Debt payments		
Insurance		
Medical expenses		
Clothing		
Other		
Other		
Other		
Total expenditures		

PART B

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES



“CHILDREN ARE AN HERITAGE OF THE LORD”

9

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Make a commitment to spend individual time with each of your children or with a child in your extended family. As you talk with each child, seek to learn something new about his or her interests, needs, and challenges.
- Take time to talk about your children with your spouse. Consider each child’s strengths and challenges. Determine what you can do to meet each child’s needs.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

PRECIOUS CHILDREN, A GIFT FROM GOD

President Thomas S. Monson
First Counselor in the First Presidency

From the book of Matthew we learn that after Jesus and His disciples descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, they paused at Galilee, then came to Capernaum. The disciples said unto Jesus, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

“And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

“And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”¹

I think it significant that Jesus loved these little ones who so recently had left the preexistence to come to earth. Children then and children now bless our lives, kindle our love, and prompt our good deeds.

Is it any wonder that the poet Wordsworth speaks thus of our birth: “Trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home.”²

Most of these little ones come to parents who eagerly await their arrival, mothers and fathers who rejoice to be a part of that miracle we call birth. No sacrifice is too great, no pain too severe, no waiting too long.

No wonder we are shocked when a wire story originating from a city in America informs that “a newborn girl who was wrapped in a paper bag and dumped in a garbage can is under close observation at a hospital. The child is doing well. ‘She’s a real beautiful, healthy baby,’ a hospital spokesman said Wednesday. Police said the infant was discovered after trash men emptied the garbage can into the back end of their dump truck and saw something move in the debris. Authorities are looking for the mother.”

It is our solemn duty, our precious privilege—even our sacred opportunity—to welcome to our homes and to our hearts the children who grace our lives.

Our children have three classrooms of learning which are quite distinct one from another. I speak of the classroom at school, the classroom in church, and the classroom called home.

The Classroom at School

The Church has always had a vital interest in public education and encourages its members to participate in parent-teacher activities and other events designed to improve the education of our youth.

There is no more important aspect of public education than the teacher who has the opportunity to love, to teach, and to inspire eager boys and girls

and young men and young women. President David O. McKay said: "Teaching is the noblest profession in the world. Upon the proper education of youth depend the permanency and purity of home, the safety and perpetuity of the nation. The parent gives the child an opportunity to live; the teacher enables the child to live well."³ I trust we shall recognize their importance and their vital mission by providing adequate facilities, the finest of books, and salaries which show our gratitude and our trust.

Each of us remembers with affection the teachers of our youth. I think it amusing that my elementary school music teacher was a Miss Sharp. She had the capacity to infuse within her pupils a love for music and taught us to identify musical instruments and their sounds. I well recall the influence of a Miss Ruth Crow who taught the subject of health. Though these were Depression times, she ensured that each sixth-grade student had a dental health chart. She personally checked each pupil for dental health and made certain that through public or private resources, no child went without proper dental care. As Miss Burkhaus, who taught geography, rolled down the maps of the world and, with her pointer, marked the capital cities of nations and the distinctive features of each country, language, and culture, little did I anticipate or dream that one day I would visit these lands and peoples.

Oh, the importance in the lives of our children of teachers who lift their spirits, sharpen their intellects, and motivate their very lives!

The Classroom at Church

The classroom at church adds a vital dimension to the education of every child and youth. In this setting each teacher can provide an upward reach to those who listen to her lessons and feel the influence of her testimony. In Primary, Sunday School, Young Women meetings, and those of the Aaronic Priesthood, well-prepared teachers, called under the inspiration of the Lord, can touch each child, each youth, and prompt all to "seek . . . out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."⁴ A word of encouragement here and a spiritual thought there can affect a precious life and leave an indelible imprint upon an immortal soul.

Many years ago, at a Church magazine awards banquet, we sat with President and Sister Harold B. Lee. President Lee said to our teenage daughter, Ann: "The Lord has blessed you with a beautiful face and body. Keep the inside just as beautiful as the outside, and you will be blessed with true happiness." This master teacher left with Ann an inspired guide to the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father.

The humble and inspired teacher in the Church classroom can instill in her pupils a love for the scriptures. Why, the teacher can bring the Apostles of old and the Savior of the world not only into the classroom but also into the hearts, the minds, the souls of our children.

The Classroom Called Home

Perhaps most significant of all classrooms is the classroom of the home. It is in the home that we form our attitudes, our deeply held beliefs. It is in the home that hope is fostered or destroyed. Our homes are the laboratories of our lives. What we do there determines the course of our lives when we leave home. Dr. Stuart E. Rosenberg wrote in his book *The Road to Confidence*, "Despite all new inventions and modern designs, fads and fetishes, no one has yet invented, or will ever invent, a satisfying substitute for one's own family."⁵

A happy home is but an earlier heaven. President George Albert Smith asked: "[Do] we want our homes to be happy[?]" If we do, let them be the abiding place of prayer, thanksgiving and gratitude."⁶

There are those situations where children come to mortality with a physical or mental handicap. Try as we will, it is not possible to know why or how such events occur. I salute those parents who without complaint take such a child into their arms and into their lives and provide that added measure of sacrifice and love to one of Heavenly Father's children.

One summer at Aspen Grove Family Camp, I observed a mother patiently feeding a teenage daughter injured at birth and totally dependent upon Mother. Mother administered each spoonful of food, each swallow of water, while holding steady the head and neck of her daughter. Silently I thought to myself, *For 17 years, Mother has provided this service and all others to her daughter, never thinking of her own comfort, her own pleasure, her own food.* May God bless such mothers, such fathers, such children. And He will.

The Innocence of Children

Parents everywhere realize that the most powerful combination of emotions in the world is not called out by any grand cosmic event, nor is it found in novels or history books, but merely by a parent gazing down upon a sleeping child.

When doing so, the truth of the words of Charles M. Dickinson come to mind:

*They are idols of hearts and of households!
They are angels of God in disguise;
The sunlight still sleeps in their tresses,
His glory still gleams in their eyes;*

*These truants from home and from Heaven,
They have made me more gentle and mild;
And I know now how Jesus could liken
The kingdom of God to a child.*⁷

In our daily experiences with children, we discover they are most perceptive and often utter profound truths. Charles Dickens, the author of the classic *A Christmas Carol*, illustrated this fact when he described the humble Bob Cratchit family assembling for a rather meager but long-anticipated Christmas dinner. Bob, the father, was returning home with his frail son Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Tiny Tim "bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame." Bob's wife asked of him, "'And how did little Tim behave?'

"'As good as gold,' said Bob, 'and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.'"⁸

Charles Dickens himself said, "I love these little people, and it is not a slight thing, when they, who are so fresh from God, love us."

Children express their love in original and innovative ways. On my birthday some time ago, a precious little girl presented me with her handwritten birthday card and enclosed in the envelope a tiny toy padlock which she liked and thought I would enjoy receiving as a gift.

"Of all the dear sights in the world, nothing is so beautiful as a child when it is giving something. Any small thing it gives. A child gives the world to you. It opens the world to you as if it were a book you'd never been able to read. But when a gift must be found, it is always some absurd little thing, pasted on crooked, . . . an angel looking like a clown. A child has so little that it can give, because it never knows it has given you everything."⁹

Such was Jenny's gift to me.

Children seem to be endowed with abiding faith in their Heavenly Father and His capacity and desire to answer their sweet prayers. It has been my personal experience that when a child prays, God listens.

Let me share with you the experience of Barry Bonnell and Dale Murphy, well-known professional baseball players formerly with the Atlanta Braves baseball club. Each is a convert to the Church, Dale Murphy having been baptized by Barry Bonnell.

"An experience occurred during the 1978 season that Barry described as 'life changing.' He was

struggling terribly, batting about .200. Because of his poor performance, he was down on himself and felt miserable. He really didn't want to go when Dale Murphy asked him to come along to the hospital, but he went anyway. There he met Ricky Little, a stalwart [Atlanta] Braves' supporter, but a youngster afflicted with leukemia. It was readily apparent that Ricky was near death. Barry felt a deep desire to think of something comforting to say but nothing seemed adequate. Finally, he asked if there was anything they could do. The youngster hesitated, and then asked if they would each hit a home run for him during the next game. Barry said [later], 'That request wasn't such a hard thing for Dale, who in fact hit two homers that night, but I was struggling at the plate and hadn't hit a homer all year. Then I felt a warm feeling come over me and I told Ricky to count on it.'" That night, Barry hit his only home run of the season.¹⁰ A child's prayer had been answered, a child's wish had been fulfilled.

A Need for Safety

If only all children had loving parents, safe homes, and caring friends, what a wonderful world would be theirs. Unfortunately, all children are not so bounteously blessed. Some children witness their fathers savagely beating their mothers, while others are on the receiving end of such abuse. What cowardice, what depravity, what shame!

Local hospitals everywhere receive these little ones, bruised and battered, accompanied by bald-faced lies that the child "ran into the door" or "fell down the stairs." Liars, bullies who abuse children, they will one day reap the whirlwind of their foul deeds. The quiet, the hurt, the offended child victim of abuse, and at times incest, must receive help.

A district judge, in a letter to me, declared: "Sexual abuse of children is one of the most depraved, destructive, and demoralizing crimes in civilized society. There is an alarming increase of reported physical, psychological, and sexual abuse of children. Our courts are becoming inundated with this repulsive behavior."

The Church does not condone such heinous and vile conduct. Rather, we condemn in the harshest of terms such treatment of God's precious children. Let the child be rescued, nurtured, loved, and healed. Let the offender be brought to justice, to accountability, for his or her actions and receive professional treatment to curtail such wicked and devilish conduct. When you and I know of such conduct and fail to take action to eradicate it, we become part of the problem. We share part of the guilt. We experience part of the punishment.

I trust I have not spoken too harshly, but I love these little ones and know that the Lord loves them too. No more touching account of this love can be found than the experience of Jesus blessing the children as described in 3 Nephi. It tells of Jesus healing the sick, teaching the people, and praying to Heavenly Father for them. But then let me quote the precious words:

"[Jesus] took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

"And when he had done this he wept again;

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

"And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; . . . and the angels did minister unto them."¹¹

You may ask, *Do such things occur even today?* Let me share with you the beautiful account of a grandmother and a grandfather who were serving a mission years ago and the manner in which their little grandson was blessed. The missionary grandfather wrote:

"My wife, Deanna, and I are now serving a mission in Jackson, Ohio. One of our big concerns as we accepted a mission call was our family. We would not be there when they had problems.

"Just before we went on our mission, our grandson, R. J., who was two-and-a-half years old, had to have surgery to correct a crossed eye. His mother asked me to go with them because R. J. and I are real buddies. The operation went well, but R. J. did cry before and after the surgery because none of the family could go into the operating room, and he was afraid.

"About six months later, while we were still on our mission, R. J. needed the other eye corrected. His mother phoned and expressed her desire for me to be there to go with them for the second operation. Of course, distance and the mission prevented me from being with him. Deanna and I fasted and prayed for the Lord to comfort our grandson during his operation.

"We called shortly after the surgery was over and found that R. J. had remembered the previous experience and did not want to leave his parents. But as soon as he entered the operating room, he quieted down. He lay down on the operating table, took off his glasses for them, and went through the operation with a calm spirit. We were very thankful; our prayers had been answered.

"A couple of days later, we called our daughter and asked about R. J. He was doing fine, and she related this incident to us: In the afternoon after the operation, R. J. awakened and told his mother that Grandpa was there during the operation. He said, 'Grandpa was there and made it all right.' You see, the Lord made the anesthesiologist appear to that little boy as though he were his grandpa, but his grandpa and grandma were on a mission 1,800 miles away."

Grandpa may not have been by your bedside, R. J., but you were in his prayers and in his thoughts. You were cradled in the hand of the Lord and blessed by the Father of us all.

My dear brothers and sisters, may the laughter of children gladden our hearts. May the faith of children soothe our souls. May the love of children prompt our deeds. "Children are an heritage of the Lord."¹² May our Heavenly Father ever bless these sweet souls, these special friends of the Master.

From the June 2000 *Ensign*, pages 2–5.

NOTES

1. Matthew 18:1–6.
2. "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."
3. *Gospel Ideals* (1954), 436.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
5. *The Road to Confidence* (1959), 121.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1944, 32.

7. From *The Children*, in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 21.
8. *A Christmas Carol and Cricket on the Hearth* (n.d.), 50–51.
9. Margaret Lee Runbeck, *Bits & Pieces*, 20 Sept. 1990.
10. James L. Ison, *Mormons in the Major Leagues* (1991), 21.
11. 3 Nephi 17:21–24.
12. Psalm 127:3.

THE SACRED ROLES OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS

10

PART 1: FATHERS' ROLES

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Review the roles of fathers and mothers as outlined in the seventh paragraph of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (see page iv). Prayer-fully determine how the counsel applies in your home and what you will do to follow it.
- Write a letter to your father or to a grandfather.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

TO THE FATHERS IN ISRAEL

President Ezra Taft Benson
13th President of the Church

My dear brethren, I am grateful to be here with you in this glorious assembly of the priesthood of God. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with me and with you as I address you on a most vital subject. This evening I would like to speak to the fathers assembled here and throughout the Church about their sacred callings.

I hope you young men will also listen carefully, inasmuch as you are now preparing to become the future fathers of the Church.

An Eternal Calling

Fathers, yours is an eternal calling from which you are never released. Callings in the Church, as important as they are, by their very nature are only for a period of time, and then an appropriate release takes place. But a father's calling is eternal, and its importance transcends time. It is a calling for both time and eternity.

President Harold B. Lee truly stated that "the most important of the Lord's work that you [fathers] will ever do will be the work you do within the walls of your own home. Home teaching, bishopric's work, and other Church duties are all important, but the most important work is within the walls of your home" (*Strengthening the Home* [pamphlet, 1973], 7).

What, then, is a father's specific responsibility within the sacred walls of his home? May I suggest two basic responsibilities of every father in Israel.

Provide for Material Needs

First, you have a sacred responsibility to provide for the material needs of your family.

The Lord clearly defined the roles of providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam, not Eve, was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow.

The Apostle Paul counsels husbands and fathers, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8).

Early in the history of the restored Church, the Lord specifically charged men with the obligation to provide for their wives and family. In January of 1832 He said, "Verily I say unto you, that every man who is obliged to provide for his own family, let him provide, and he shall in nowise lose his crown" (D&C 75:28). Three months later the Lord said again, "Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken" (D&C 83:2). This is the divine right of a wife and mother. While she cares for and nourishes her children at home, her husband earns the living for the family, which makes this nourishing possible.

In a home where there is an able-bodied husband, he is expected to be the breadwinner. Sometimes we hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect the wives to go out of the home and work, even though the husband is still capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job

he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting may have to be tighter.

Also, the need for education or material things does not justify the postponing of children in order to keep the wife working as the breadwinner of the family.

Counsel of President Kimball

I remember the counsel of our beloved prophet Spencer W. Kimball to married students. He said: "I have told tens of thousands of young folks that when they marry they should not wait for children until they have finished their schooling and financial desires. . . . They should live together normally and let the children come. . . .

"I know of no scriptures," President Kimball continued, "where an authorization is given to young wives to withhold their families and go to work to put their husbands through school. There are thousands of husbands who have worked their own way through school and have reared families at the same time" ("Marriage Is Honorable," in *Speeches of the Year, 1973* [1974], 263).

A Mother's Role in the Home

Brethren of the priesthood, I continue to emphasize the importance of mothers staying home to nurture, care for, and train their children in the principles of righteousness.

As I travel throughout the Church, I feel that the great majority of Latter-day Saint mothers earnestly want to follow this counsel. But we know that sometimes the mother works outside of the home at the encouragement, or even insistence, of her husband. It is he who wants the items of convenience that the extra income can buy. Not only will the family suffer in such instances, brethren, but your own spiritual growth and progression will be hampered. I say to all of you, the Lord has charged men with the responsibility to provide for their families in such a way that the wife is allowed to fulfill her role as mother in the home.

Family Preparedness More Urgent Today

Fathers, another vital aspect of providing for the material needs of your family is the provision you should be making for your family in case of an emergency. Family preparedness has been a long-established welfare principle. It is even more urgent today.

I ask you earnestly, have you provided for your family a year's supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel? The revelation to produce and store

food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.

Also, are you living within your income and saving a little?

Are you honest with the Lord in the payment of your tithes? Living this divine law will bring both spiritual and material blessings.

Yes, brethren, as fathers in Israel you have a great responsibility to provide for the material needs of your family and to have the necessary provisions in case of emergency.

Provide Spiritual Leadership

Second, you have a sacred responsibility to provide spiritual leadership in your family.

In a pamphlet published some years ago by the Council of the Twelve, we said the following: "Fatherhood is leadership, the most important kind of leadership. It has always been so; it always will be so. Father, with the assistance and counsel and encouragement of your eternal companion, you preside in the home" (*Father, Consider Your Ways* [pamphlet, 1973], 4–5).

However, along with that presiding position come important obligations. We sometimes hear accounts of men, even in the Church, who think that being head of the home somehow puts them in a superior role and allows them to dictate and make demands upon their family.

The Apostle Paul points out that "the husband is the head of the wife, *even as* Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23; italics added). That is the model we are to follow in our role of presiding in the home. We do not find the Savior leading the Church with a harsh or unkind hand. We do not find the Savior treating His Church with disrespect or neglect. We do not find the Savior using force or coercion to accomplish His purposes. Nowhere do we find the Savior doing anything but that which edifies, uplifts, comforts, and exalts the Church. Brethren, I say to you with all soberness, He is the model we must follow as we take the spiritual lead in our families.

Particularly is this true in your relationship with your wife.

Love Your Wife

Here again the counsel from the Apostle Paul is most beautiful and to the point. He said simply, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25).

In latter-day revelation the Lord speaks again of this obligation. He said, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). To my knowledge there is only one other thing in all scripture that we are commanded to love with all our hearts, and that is God Himself. Think what that means!

This kind of love can be shown for your wives in so many ways. First and foremost, nothing except God Himself takes priority over your wife in your life—not work, not recreation, not hobbies. Your wife is your precious, eternal helpmate—your companion.

What does it mean to love someone with all your heart? It means to love with all your emotional feelings and with all your devotion. Surely when you love your wife with all your heart, you cannot demean her, criticize her, find fault with her, or abuse her by words, sullen behavior, or actions.

What does it mean to "cleave unto her"? It means to stay close to her, to be loyal and faithful to her, to communicate with her, and to express your love for her.

Love means being sensitive to her feelings and needs. She wants to be noticed and treasured. She wants to be told that you view her as lovely and attractive and important to you. Love means putting her welfare and self-esteem as a high priority in your life.

You should be grateful that she is the mother of your children and the queen of your home, grateful that she has chosen homemaking and motherhood—to bear, to nourish, to love, and to train your children—as the noblest calling of all.

Husbands, recognize your wife's intelligence and her ability to counsel with you as a real partner regarding family plans, family activities, and family budgeting. Don't be stingy with your time or with your means.

Give her the opportunity to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially as well as spiritually.

Remember, brethren, love can be nurtured and nourished by little tokens. Flowers on special occasions are wonderful, but so is your willingness to help with the dishes, change diapers, get up with a crying child in the night, and leave the television or the newspaper to help with the dinner. Those are the quiet ways we say "I love you" with our actions. They bring rich dividends for such little effort.

This kind of loving priesthood leadership applies to your children as well as to your wife.

A Father's Role in the Home

Mothers play an important role as the heart of the home, but this in no way lessens the equally important role fathers should play, as head of the home, in nurturing, training, and loving their children.

As the patriarch in your home, you have a serious responsibility to assume leadership in working with your children. You must help create a home where the Spirit of the Lord can abide. Your place is to give direction to all family life. You should take an active part in establishing family rules and discipline.

Your homes should be havens of peace and joy for your family. Surely no child should fear his own father—especially a priesthood father. A father's duty is to make his home a place of happiness and joy. He cannot do this when there is bickering, quarreling, contention, or unrighteous behavior. The powerful effect of righteous fathers in setting an example, disciplining and training, nurturing and loving is vital to the spiritual welfare of his children.

Give Spiritual Leadership

With love in my heart for the fathers in Israel, may I suggest ten specific ways that fathers can give spiritual leadership to their children:

1. Give father's blessings to your children. Baptize and confirm your children. Ordain your sons to the priesthood. These will become spiritual highlights in the lives of your children.
2. Personally direct family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings. Your personal involvement will show your children how important these activities really are.
3. Whenever possible, attend Church meetings together as a family. Family worship under your leadership is vital to your children's spiritual welfare.
4. Go on daddy-daughter dates and father-and-sons' outings with your children. As a family, go on campouts and picnics, to ball games and recitals, to school programs, and so forth. Having Dad there makes all the difference.
5. Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children.
6. Have regular one-on-one visits with your children. Let them talk about what they would like to. Teach them gospel principles. Teach them true values. Tell them you love them. Personal time with your children tells them where Dad puts his priorities.

7. Teach your children to work, and show them the value of working toward a worthy goal. Establishing mission funds and education funds for your children shows them what Dad considers to be important.

8. Encourage good music and art and literature in your homes. Homes that have a spirit of refinement and beauty will bless the lives of your children forever.

9. As distances allow, regularly attend the temple with your wife. Your children will then better understand the importance of temple marriage and temple vows and the eternal family unit.

10. Have your children see your joy and satisfaction in service to the Church. This can become contagious to them, so they, too, will want to serve in the Church and will love the kingdom.

Your Most Important Calling

Oh, husbands and fathers in Israel, you can do so much for the salvation and exaltation of your families! Your responsibilities are so important.

Remember your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you will never be released.

May you always provide for the material needs of your family and, with your eternal companion at your side, may you fulfill your sacred responsibility to provide the spiritual leadership in your home.

From an address by President Benson in the priesthood session of the October 1987 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 59–63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 48–51).

THE SACRED ROLES OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS

11

PART 2: MOTHERS' ROLES

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- In the proclamation on the family, we are counseled that “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners” (see page iv in this study guide). With your spouse, review President Ezra Taft Benson’s 10 suggestions for fathers, on pages 41–42 in this study guide, and his 10 suggestions for mothers, on pages 45–47. Discuss ways you can work together and support one another in these responsibilities.
- Write a letter to your mother or to a grandmother.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following articles. If you are married, read and discuss the articles with your spouse.

“BECAUSE SHE IS A MOTHER”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Tribute to Mothers

There are some lines attributed to Victor Hugo which read:

“She broke the bread into two fragments and gave them to her children, who ate with eagerness. ‘She hath kept none for herself,’ grumbled the sergeant.

“‘Because she is not hungry,’ said a soldier.

“‘No,’ said the sergeant, ‘because she is a mother.’”

In a year when we are celebrating the faith and valor of those who made that exacting trek across Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming, I wish to pay tribute to the modern counterparts of those pioneer mothers who watched after, prayed for, and far too often buried their babies on that long trail. To the women within the sound of my voice who dearly want to be mothers and are not, I say through your tears and ours on that subject, God will yet, in days that lie somewhere ahead, bring “hope to [the] desolate heart.”¹ As prophets have repeatedly taught from this pulpit, ultimately “no blessing shall be withheld” from the faithful, even if those blessings do not come immediately.² In the meantime we rejoice that the call to nurture is not limited to our own flesh and blood.

In speaking of mothers I do not neglect the crucial, urgent role of fathers, particularly as fatherlessness in contemporary homes is considered by some to be “the central social problem of our time.”³ Indeed, fatherlessness can be a problem even in a

home where the father is present—eating and sleeping, so to speak, “by remote.” But that is a priesthood message for another day. Today I wish to praise those motherly hands that have rocked the infant’s cradle and, through the righteousness taught to their children there, are at the very center of the Lord’s purposes for us in mortality.

In so speaking I echo Paul, who wrote in praise of Timothy’s “unfeigned faith . . . , which dwelt first,” he said, “in thy grandmother Lois, and [in] thy mother Eunice.”⁴ “From [the days when thou wert] a child,” Paul said, “thou hast known the holy scriptures.”⁵ We give thanks for all the mothers and grandmothers from whom such truths have been learned at such early ages.

Sacrifices Made by Young Mothers

In speaking of mothers generally, I especially wish to praise and encourage *young* mothers. The work of a mother is hard, too often unheralded work. The young years are often those when either husband or wife—or both—may still be in school or in those earliest and leanest stages of developing the husband’s breadwinning capacities. Finances fluctuate daily between low and nonexistent. The apartment is usually decorated in one of two smart designs—Deseret Industries provincial or early Mother Hubbard. The car, if there is one, runs on smooth tires and an empty tank. But with night feedings and night teething, often the greatest challenge of all for a young mother is simply fatigue. Through these years, mothers go longer on less sleep and give more to others with less personal renewal for themselves than any other group I know at any other time in life. It is not surprising when the shadows

under their eyes sometimes vaguely resemble the state of Rhode Island.

Of course the irony is that this is often the sister we want to call—or need to call—to service in the ward and stake auxiliaries. That’s understandable. Who wouldn’t want the exemplary influence of these young Loises- and Eunices-in-the-making? Everyone, be wise. Remember that families are the highest priority of all, especially in those formative years. Even so, young mothers will still find magnificent ways to serve faithfully in the Church, even as others serve and strengthen them and their families in like manner.

Do the best you can through these years, but whatever else you do, cherish that role that is so uniquely yours and for which heaven itself sends angels to watch over you and your little ones. Husbands—especially husbands—as well as Church leaders and friends in every direction, be helpful and sensitive and wise. Remember, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”⁶

Mothers, we acknowledge and esteem your faith in every footstep. Please know that it is worth it then, now, and forever. And if, for whatever reason, you are making this courageous effort alone, without your husband at your side, then our prayers will be all the greater for you, and our determination to lend a helping hand even more resolute.

Mothers Do God’s Work

One young mother wrote to me recently that her anxiety tended to come on three fronts. One was that whenever she heard talks on LDS motherhood, she worried because she felt she didn’t measure up or somehow wasn’t going to be equal to the task. Second, she felt like the world expected her to teach her children reading, writing, interior design, Latin, calculus, and the Internet—all before the baby said something terribly ordinary, like “goo goo.” Third, she often felt people were sometimes patronizing, almost always without meaning to be, because the advice she got or even the compliments she received seemed to reflect nothing of the mental investment, the spiritual and emotional exertion, the long-night, long-day, stretched-to-the-limit demands that sometimes are required in trying to be and wanting to be the mother God hopes she will be.

But one thing, she said, keeps her going: “Through the thick and the thin of this, and through the occasional tears of it all, *I know deep down inside I am doing God’s work.* I know that in my motherhood I am in an eternal partnership with Him. I am deeply moved that God finds His ultimate purpose and meaning in being a parent, even if some of His children make Him weep.

“It is this realization,” she says, “that I try to recall on those inevitably difficult days when all of this can be a bit overwhelming. Maybe it is precisely our inability and anxiousness that urge us to reach out to Him and enhance His ability to reach back to us. Maybe He secretly hopes we *will* be anxious,” she said, “and *will* plead for His help. Then, I believe, He can teach these children directly, through us, but with no resistance offered. I like that idea,” she concludes. “It gives me hope. If I can be right before my Father in Heaven, perhaps His guidance to our children can be unimpeded. Maybe then it can be *His* work and *His* glory in a very literal sense.”⁷

Your Children Will Call You Blessed

In light of that kind of expression, it is clear that some of those Rhode Island-sized shadows come not just from diapers and carpooling but from at least a few sleepless nights spent searching the soul, seeking earnestly for the capacity to raise these children to be what God wants them to be. Moved by that kind of devotion and determination, may I say to mothers collectively, in the name of the Lord, you are magnificent. You are doing terrifically well. The very fact that you have been given such a responsibility is everlasting evidence of the trust your Father in Heaven has in you. He knows that your giving birth to a child does not immediately propel you into the circle of the omniscient. If you and your husband will strive to love God and live the gospel yourselves; if you will plead for that guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit promised to the faithful; if you will go to the temple to both make and claim the promises of the most sacred covenants a woman or man can make in this world; if you will show others, including your children, the same caring, compassionate, forgiving heart you want heaven to show you; if you try your best to be the best parent you can be, you will have done all that a human being can do and all that God expects you to do.

Sometimes the decision of a child or a grandchild will break your heart. Sometimes expectations won’t immediately be met. Every mother and father worries about that. Even that beloved and wonderfully successful parent President Joseph F. Smith pled, “Oh! God, let me not lose my own.”⁸ That is every parent’s cry, and in it is something of every parent’s fear. But no one has failed who keeps trying and keeps praying. You have every right to receive encouragement and to know in the end your children will call your name blessed, just like those generations of foremothers before you who hoped your same hopes and felt your same fears.

Yours is the grand tradition of Eve, the mother of all the human family, the one who understood that she and Adam *had* to fall in order that “men [and

women] might be”⁹ and that there would be joy. Yours is the grand tradition of Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel, without whom there could not have been those magnificent patriarchal promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which bless us all. Yours is the grand tradition of Lois and Eunice and the mothers of the 2,000 stripling warriors. Yours is the grand tradition of Mary, chosen and foreordained from before this world was, to conceive, carry, and bear the Son of God Himself. We thank all of you, including our own mothers, and tell you there is nothing more important in this world than participating so directly in the work and glory of God, in bringing to pass the mortality and earthly life of His daughters and sons, so that immortality and eternal life can come in those celestial realms on high.

Rely on the Savior Forever

When you have come to the Lord in meekness and lowliness of heart and, as one mother said, “pounded on the doors of heaven to ask for, to plead for, to demand guidance and wisdom and help for this wondrous task,” that door is thrown open to provide you the influence and the help of all eternity. Claim the promises of the Savior of the world. Ask for the healing balm of the Atonement for whatever may be troubling you or your children. Know that in faith things will be made right in spite of you or, more correctly, because of you.

You can’t possibly do this alone, but you *do* have help. The Master of Heaven and Earth is there to

bless you—He who resolutely goes after the lost sheep, sweeps thoroughly to find the lost coin, waits everlastingly for the return of the prodigal son. Yours is the work of salvation, and therefore you will be magnified, compensated, made more than you are and better than you have ever been as you try to make honest effort, however feeble you may sometimes feel that to be.

Remember, remember all the days of your motherhood: “Ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.”¹⁰

Rely on Him. Rely on Him heavily. Rely on Him forever. And “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope.”¹¹ You are doing God’s work. You are doing it wonderfully well. He is blessing you and He will bless you, even—no, *especially*—when your days and your nights may be the most challenging. Like the woman who anonymously, meekly, perhaps even with hesitation and some embarrassment, fought her way through the crowd just to touch the hem of the Master’s garment, so Christ will say to the women who worry and wonder and sometimes weep over their responsibility as mothers, “Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.”¹² And it will make your children whole as well.

From an address by Elder Holland in the April 1997 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 46–49; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 35–37).

NOTES

1. “Redeemer of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 6; see also 3 Nephi 22:1.
2. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76; Harold B. Lee, *Ye Are the Light of the World: Selected Sermons and Writings of President Harold B. Lee* (1974), 292; and Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 94.
3. Tom Lowe, “Fatherlessness: The Central Social Problem of Our Time,” Claremont Institute Home Page Editorial, Jan. 1996.
4. 2 Timothy 1:5.
5. 2 Timothy 3:15.
6. Ecclesiastes 3:1.
7. Personal correspondence.
8. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 462.
9. 2 Nephi 2:25.
10. 2 Nephi 31:19.
11. 2 Nephi 31:20.
12. Matthew 9:22.

TO THE MOTHERS IN ZION

President Ezra Taft Benson
13th President of the Church

Mothers in Zion, your God-given roles are so vital to your own exaltation and to the salvation and exaltation of your family. A child needs a mother more than all the things money can buy. Spending time with your children is the greatest gift of all.

With love in my heart for the mothers in Zion, I would now like to suggest ten specific ways our mothers may spend effective time with their children.

Be at the Crossroads. First, take time to always be at the crossroads when your children are either coming or going—when they leave and return from school, when they leave and return from dates, when they bring friends home. Be there at the

crossroads whether your children are six or sixteen. In Proverbs we read, "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15). Among the greatest concerns in our society are the millions of latchkey children who come home daily to empty houses, unsupervised by working parents.

Be a Real Friend. Second, mothers, take time to be a real friend to your children. Listen to your children, really listen. Talk with them, laugh and joke with them, sing with them, play with them, cry with them, hug them, honestly praise them. Yes, regularly spend unrushed one-on-one time with each child. Be a real friend to your children.

Read to Your Children. Third, mothers, take time to read to your children. Starting from the cradle, read to your sons and daughters. Remember what the poet said:

You may have tangible wealth untold;
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.
Richer than I you can never be—
I had a mother who read to me.
(Strickland Gillilan, "The Reading Mother.")

You will plant a love for good literature and a real love for the scriptures if you will read to your children regularly.

Pray with Your Children. Fourth, take time to pray with your children. Family prayers, under the direction of the father, should be held morning and night. Have your children feel of your faith as you call down the blessings of heaven upon them. Paraphrasing the words of James, "The . . . fervent prayer of a righteous [mother] availeth much" (James 5:16). Have your children participate in family and personal prayers, and rejoice in their sweet utterances to their Father in Heaven.

Have Weekly Home Evenings. Fifth, take time to have a meaningful weekly home evening. With your husband presiding, participate in a spiritual and an uplifting home evening each week. Have your children actively involved. Teach them correct principles. Make this one of your great family traditions. Remember the marvelous promise made by President Joseph F. Smith when home evenings were first introduced to the Church: "If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 4:339). This wonderful promise is still in effect today.

Be Together at Mealtimes. Sixth, take time to be together at mealtimes as often as possible. This is a challenge as the children get older and lives get busier. But happy conversation, sharing of the day's plans and activities, and special teaching moments occur at mealtime because mothers and fathers and children work at it.

Read Scriptures Daily. Seventh, take time daily to read the scriptures together as a family. Individual scripture reading is important, but family scripture reading is vital. Reading the Book of Mormon together as a family will especially bring increased spirituality into your home and will give both parents and children the power to resist temptation and to have the Holy Ghost as their constant companion. I promise you that the Book of Mormon will change the lives of your family.

Do Things as a Family. Eighth, take time to do things together as a family. Make family outings and picnics and birthday celebrations and trips special times and memory builders. Whenever possible, attend, as a family, events where one of the family members is involved, such as a school play, a ball game, a talk, a recital. Attend church meetings together and sit together as a family when you can. Mothers who help families pray and play together will stay together and will bless children's lives forever.

Teach Your Children. Ninth, mothers, take time to teach your children. Catch the teaching moments. This can be done anytime during the day—at mealtime, in casual settings, or at special sit-down times together, at the foot of the bed at the end of the day, or during an early morning walk together. Mothers, you are your children's best teacher. Don't shift this precious responsibility to day-care centers or babysitters. A mother's love and prayerful concern for her children are her most important ingredients in teaching her own.

Teach children gospel principles. Teach them it pays to be good. Teach them there is no safety in sin. Teach them a love for the gospel of Jesus Christ and a testimony of its divinity.

Teach your sons and daughters modesty, and teach them to respect manhood and womanhood. Teach your children sexual purity, proper dating standards, temple marriage, missionary service, and the importance of accepting and magnifying Church callings.

Teach them a love for work and the value of a good education.

Teach them the importance of the right kind of entertainment, including appropriate movies and

videos and music and books and magazines. Discuss the evils of pornography and drugs, and teach them the value of living the clean life.

Yes, mothers, teach your children the gospel in your own home, at your own fireside. This is the most effective teaching that your children will ever receive. This is the Lord's way of teaching. The Church cannot teach like you can. The school cannot. The day-care center cannot. But you can, and the Lord will sustain you. Your children will remember your teachings forever, and when they are old, they will not depart from them. They will call you blessed—their truly angel mother.

Mothers, this kind of heavenly, motherly teaching takes time—lots of time. It cannot be done effectively part-time. It must be done all the time in order to save and exalt your children. This is your divine calling.

Truly Love Your Children. Tenth and finally, mothers, take the time to truly love your children. A mother's unqualified love approaches Christlike love.

Here is a beautiful tribute by a son to his mother: "I don't remember much about her views of voting nor her social prestige; and what her ideas on child training, diet, and eugenics were, I cannot recall. The main thing that sifts back to me now through the thick undergrowth of years is that she loved me. She liked to lie on the grass with me and tell stories,

or to run and hide with us children. She was always hugging me. And I liked it. She had a sunny face. To me it was like God, and all the beatitudes saints tell of Him. And sing! Of all the sensations pleasurable to my life nothing can compare with the rapture of crawling up into her lap and going to sleep while she swung to and fro in her rocking chair and sang. Thinking of this, I wonder if the woman of today, with all her tremendous notions and plans, realizes what an almighty factor she is in shaping of her child for weal or woe. I wonder if she realizes how much sheer love and attention count for in a child's life."

Mothers, your teenage children also need that same kind of love and attention. It seems easier for many mothers and fathers to express and show their love to their children when they are young, but more difficult when they are older. Work at this prayerfully. There need be no generation gap. And the key is love. Our young people need love and attention, not indulgence. They need empathy and understanding, not indifference from mothers and fathers. They need the parents' time. A mother's kindly teachings and her love for and confidence in a teenage son or daughter can literally save them from a wicked world.

From an address by President Benson at a fireside for parents on 22 February 1987.

TEACHING CHILDREN THROUGH EXAMPLE AND INSTRUCTION

12

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Ponder the needs of your children or the needs of grandchildren, nieces and nephews, or other children you know. Plan for opportunities to teach these children through your actions and words.
- Review the material on teaching in the family that is found in *Teaching, No Greater Call* (36123), pages 127–43, and the *Family Guidebook* (31180), pages 4–10. If you are married, read and discuss this material with your spouse.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following articles. If you are married, read and discuss the articles with your spouse.

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IN THE WORLD—GOOD PARENTING

Elder James E. Faust

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Being a Parent Is a Divine Calling

I feel moved upon to discuss a subject which I have chosen to call the greatest challenge in the world. It has to do with the privilege and responsibility of being good parents. On this subject there are about as many opinions as there are parents, yet there are few who claim to have all of the answers. I am certainly not one of them.

I feel that there are more outstanding young men and women among our people at present than at any other moment in my lifetime. This presupposes that most of these fine young people have come from good homes and have committed, caring parents. Even so, the most conscientious parents feel that they may have made some mistakes. One time, when I did a thoughtless thing, I remember my own mother exclaiming, “Where did I fail?”

The Lord has directed, “Bring up your children in light and truth” (D&C 93:40). To me, there is no more important human effort.

Being a father or a mother is not only a great challenge, it is a divine calling. It is an effort requiring consecration. President David O. McKay stated that being parents is “the greatest trust that has been given to human beings” (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children* [pamphlet, n.d.], 1).

Creating Successful Homes

While few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents, few opportunities offer greater potential for joy. Surely no more important work is to be done in this world than preparing our children to be God-fearing, happy, honorable, and productive. Parents will find no more fulfilling happiness than to have their children honor them and their teachings. It is the glory of parenthood. John testified, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). In my opinion, the teaching, rearing, and training of children requires more intelligence, intuitive understanding, humility, strength, wisdom, spirituality, perseverance, and hard work than any other challenge we might have in life. This is especially so when moral foundations of honor and decency are eroding around us. To have successful homes, values must be taught, and there must be rules, there must be standards, and there must be absolutes. Many societies give parents very little support in teaching and honoring moral values. A number of cultures are becoming essentially valueless, and many of the younger people in those societies are becoming moral cynics.

As societies as a whole have decayed and lost their moral identity and so many homes are broken, the best hope is to turn greater attention and effort to the teaching of the next generation—our children. In order to do this, we must first reinforce the primary teachers of children. Chief among these are the parents and other family members, and the best environment should be in the home. Somehow, some way, we must try harder to make our homes stronger

so that they will stand as sanctuaries against the unwholesome, pervasive moral dry rot around us. Harmony, happiness, peace, and love in the home can help give children the required inner strength to cope with life's challenges. Barbara Bush, wife of [United States] President George Bush, a few months ago said to the graduates of Wellesley College:

"But whatever the era, whatever the times, one thing will never change: Fathers and mothers, if you have children, they must come first. You must read to your children and you must hug your children and you must love your children. Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House but on what happens inside your house" (*Washington Post*, 2 June 1990, 2).

To be a good father and mother requires that the parents defer many of their own needs and desires in favor of the needs of their children. As a consequence of this sacrifice, conscientious parents develop a nobility of character and learn to put into practice the selfless truths taught by the Savior Himself.

I have the greatest respect for single parents who struggle and sacrifice, trying against almost super-human odds to hold the family together. They should be honored and helped in their heroic efforts. But any mother's or father's task is much easier where there are two functioning parents in the home. Children often challenge and tax the strength and wisdom of both parents.

How Often Do You Have Family Prayer?

A few years ago, Bishop Stanley Smoot was interviewed by President Spencer W. Kimball. President Kimball asked, "How often do you have family prayer?"

Bishop Smoot answered, "We try to have family prayer twice a day, but we average about once."

President Kimball answered, "In the past, having family prayer once a day may have been all right. But in the future it will not be enough if we are going to save our families."

I wonder if having casual and infrequent family home evening will be enough in the future to fortify our children with sufficient moral strength. In the future, infrequent family scripture study may be inadequate to arm our children with the virtue necessary to withstand the moral decay of the environment in which they will live. Where in the world will the children learn chastity, integrity, honesty, and basic human decency if not at home? These values will, of course, be reinforced at church, but parental teaching is more constant.

Parents Must Set the Example

When parents try to teach their children to avoid danger, it is no answer for parents to say to their children, "We are experienced and wise in the ways of the world, and we can get closer to the edge of the cliff than you." Parental hypocrisy can make children cynical and unbelieving of what they are taught in the home. For instance, when parents attend movies they forbid their children to see, parental credibility is diminished. If children are expected to be honest, parents must be honest. If children are expected to be virtuous, parents must be virtuous. If you expect your children to be honorable, you must be honorable.

Among the other values children should be taught are respect for others, beginning with the child's own parents and family; respect for the symbols of faith and patriotic beliefs of others; respect for law and order; respect for the property of others; respect for authority. Paul reminds us that children should "learn first to shew piety at home" (1 Timothy 5:4).

Disciplining Children

One of the most difficult parental challenges is to appropriately discipline children. Child rearing is so individualistic. Every child is different and unique. What works with one may not work with another. I do not know who is wise enough to say what discipline is too harsh or what is too lenient except the parents of the children themselves, who love them most. It is a matter of prayerful discernment for the parents. Certainly the overarching and undergirding principle is that the discipline of children must be motivated more by love than by punishment. Brigham Young counseled, "If you are ever called upon to chasten a person, never chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 278). Direction and discipline are, however, certainly an indispensable part of child rearing. If parents do not discipline their children, then the public will discipline them in a way the parents do not like. Without discipline, children will not respect either the rules of the home or of society.

A principal purpose for discipline is to teach obedience. President David O. McKay stated: "Parents who fail to teach obedience to their children, if [their] homes do not develop obedience society will demand it and get it. It is therefore better for the home, with its kindness, sympathy and understanding to train the child in obedience rather than callously to leave him to the brutal and unsympathetic discipline that society will impose if the

home has not already fulfilled its obligation" (*The Responsibility of Parents to Their Children*, 3).

Teaching Children to Work

An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to work. As we grow up, many of us are like the man who said, "I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours" (Jerome Klapka Jerome, in *The International Dictionary of Thoughts*, comp. John P. Bradley, Leo F. Daniels, and Thomas C. Jones [1969], 782). Again, the best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, "act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon"? (2 Nephi 2:26).

Luther Burbank, one of the world's greatest horticulturists, said, "If we had paid no more attention to our plants than we have to our children, we would now be living in a jungle of weeds" (in *Elbert Hubbard's Scrap Book* [1923], 227).

Special Challenges for Parents

Children are also beneficiaries of moral agency by which we are all afforded the opportunity to progress, grow, and develop. That agency also permits children to pursue the alternate choice of selfishness, wastefulness, self-indulgence, and self-destruction. Children often express this agency when very young.

Let parents who have been conscientious, loving, and concerned and who have lived the principles of righteousness as best they could be comforted in knowing that they are good parents despite the actions of some of their children. The children themselves have a responsibility to listen, obey, and, having been taught, to learn. Parents cannot always answer for all their children's misconduct because they cannot ensure the children's good behavior. Some few children could tax even Solomon's wisdom and Job's patience.

There is often a special challenge for those parents who are affluent or overly indulgent. In a sense, some children in those circumstances hold their parents hostage by withholding their support of parental rules unless the parents acquiesce to the children's demands. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, "Those who do too much *for* their children will soon

find they can do nothing *with* their children. So many children have been so much *done for* they are almost *done in*" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 150; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 101). It seems to be human nature that we do not fully appreciate material things we have not ourselves earned.

There is a certain irony in the fact that some parents are so anxious for their children to be accepted by and be popular with their peers; yet these same parents fear that their children may be doing the things their peers are doing.

Helping Children Internalize Values

Generally, those children who make the decision and have the resolve to abstain from drugs, alcohol, and illicit sex are those who have adopted and internalized the strong values of their homes as lived by their parents. In times of difficult decisions they are most likely to follow the teachings of their parents rather than the example of their peers or the sophistries of the media which glamorize alcohol consumption, illicit sex, infidelity, dishonesty, and other vices. They are like Helaman's two thousand young men who "had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them" from death (Alma 56:47). "And they rehearsed . . . the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it" (Alma 56:48).

What seems to help cement parental teachings and values in place in children's lives is a firm belief in Deity. When this belief becomes part of their very souls, they have inner strength. So, of all that is important to be taught, what should parents teach? The scriptures tell us that parents are to teach their children "faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost," and "the doctrine of repentance" (D&C 68:25). These truths must be taught in the home. They cannot be taught in the public schools, nor will they be fostered by the government or by society. Of course, Church programs can help, but the most effective teaching takes place in the home.

A Thousand Threads of Love

Parental teaching moments need not be big or dramatic or powerful. We learn this from the Master Teacher. Charles Henry Parkhurst said:

"The completed beauty of Christ's life is only the added beauty of little inconspicuous acts of beauty—talking with the woman at the well; . . . showing the young ruler the stealthy ambition laid away in his heart that kept him out of the kingdom of Heaven; . . . teaching a little knot of followers how to pray; . . . kindling a fire and broiling fish that his disciples

might have a breakfast waiting for them when they came ashore from a night of fishing, cold, tired, and discouraged. All of these things, you see, let us in so easily into the real quality and tone of [Christ's] interests, so specific, so narrowed down, so enlisted in what is small, so engrossed with what is minute" ("Kindness and Love," in *Leaves of Gold* [1938], 177).

And so it is with being parents. The little things are the big things sewn into the family tapestry by a thousand threads of love, faith, discipline, sacrifice, patience, and work.

Children of the Covenant

There are some great spiritual promises which may help faithful parents in this church. Children of eternal sealings may have visited upon them the

divine promises made to their valiant forebears who nobly kept their covenants. Covenants remembered by parents will be remembered by God. The children may thus become the beneficiaries and inheritors of these great covenants and promises. This is because they are the children of the covenant (see Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110–11).

God bless the struggling, sacrificing, honorable parents of this world. May He especially honor the covenants kept by faithful parents among our people and watch over these children of the covenant.

From an address by Elder Faust in the October 1990 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 39–43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 32–35).

A TABLE ENCIRCLED WITH LOVE

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis
Of the Seventy

Much has been written about the importance of the home. Elder Marion G. Romney has told us that "at the heart of society's fatal sickness is the instability of the family."¹ We recognize that some homes are large, graciously appointed, even luxurious. Others are very small and humble, with scant furnishings. Yet each and every "home can be a heav'n on earth when we are filled with love, . . . where we want to be," as one of our beloved hymns reminds us.²

One of the more important furnishings found in most homes is the kitchen table. Now it may be small, it may be large, or in the form of a little counter with barely room to put the food and utensils. Its major function seems to be a place for the different members of the family to receive nourishment.

On this special occasion my desire is to bring your attention to a deeper, more important function for the kitchen table, where we can receive much more than nourishment for our physical well-being.

Gospel Discussions around the Table

A family generally has two or more members of differing ages, but the family needs to meet—preferably not just to eat but to pray, to talk, to listen, to relate, to learn, and to grow together. President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated it so well:

"My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—is a plea to save the children. Too many

of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and despair. Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture. They need kindness and refreshment and affection. Every home, regardless of the cost of the house, can provide an environment of love which will be an environment of salvation."³

Most family members are subjected to the many forces of the world outside of the home, as well as the powerful influence of radio, television, videotapes, and many other things which we bring into our homes.

Picture a family gathering around a table, perhaps the kitchen table, talking about the gospel, talking about the sacrament meetings, the messages, talking about the current *Ensign* or the current *New Era*, talking about school with all of its ramifications, talking about general conference, talking about the Sunday School lessons, listening to good music, talking about Jesus Christ and His teachings. The list could be expanded. Not only parents but all family members would be wise to make certain that each person present has a chance to talk and ample opportunity to participate.

Family Prayer around the Table

Think of the potential of a family kneeling around a table (without television), praying, pleading for help, thanking our Father for blessings—teaching all ages the importance of a loving Father in Heaven. Family prayer with little ones may well develop older ones who someday will pray with their families.

Elder Thomas S. Monson stated it well:

“The Lord directed that we have family prayer when he said: ‘Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.’ (3 Nephi 18:21.)

“Will you join me as we look in on a typical Latter-day Saint family offering prayers unto the Lord? Father, mother, and each of the children kneel, bow their heads, and close their eyes. A sweet spirit of love, unity, and peace fills the home. As [a] father hears his tiny son pray unto God that his dad will do the right things and be obedient to the Lord’s bidding, do you think that such a father would find it difficult to honor the prayer of his precious son? As a teenage daughter hears her sweet mother plead unto the Lord that her daughter will be inspired in the selection of her companions, that she will prepare herself for a temple marriage, don’t you believe that such a daughter will seek to honor this humble, pleading petition of her mother, whom she so dearly loves? When father, mother, and each of the children earnestly pray that these fine sons in the family will live worthy that they may in due time receive a call to serve as ambassadors of the Lord in the mission fields of the Church, don’t we begin to see how such sons grow to young manhood with an overwhelming desire to serve as missionaries?”⁴

As many have said, “How could you possibly send your parents and your children out into the world each day without gathering together and talking to the Lord?” Wise parents will examine their schedules and plan at least one time daily to gather the family for the blessings of prayer. Very soon, young members learn how to take their turn and learn the precious values found in family prayer.

Make Home a Happy Place

I have stated before that “home should be a happy place because all work to keep it that way. It is said that happiness is homemade, and we should endeavor to make our homes happy and pleasant places for us and our children. A happy home is one centered around the teachings of the gospel. This takes constant, careful effort by all concerned.”⁵

A busy teenager in a rather large family complained about the amount of time that family prayer was taking. As the wise mother was praying the next day, she intentionally left that youngster out of the prayer. As the prayer concluded, the busy child said, “Mother, you left me out of the prayer!” The loving mother explained that she was just responding to the youngster’s complaint. The busy child complained, “Don’t leave me out.”

Scripture Study around the Table

Visualize a family surrounding a table with the scriptures open, discussing the many truths and lessons to absorb. This indeed is a table encircled with love!

Educators agree that children need to read much more outside of school. We can bless our children by reading the scriptures with them on a daily basis—at the kitchen table.

To have a time when the family meets at the kitchen table may take considerable adjustment and careful planning, but what could be of more importance to the unity of the family, the spiritual growth of the family, the bridges built between members of a family as they talk, listen, and respond, surrounded by love? Our major success is simply trying—over and over.

Strengthen Family Ties

There are many forces in the world today seeking to decimate the family and the home. Wise parents will strive to strengthen family ties, increase spirituality in the home, and focus on Jesus Christ and temple activity. President Howard W. Hunter has told us:

“I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. . . .

“Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy.”⁶

The direction given by President Hunter can be markedly enhanced by what takes place around the kitchen table.

In our homes we should practice how to treat others. As Goethe said so well, “If you treat [an individual] as he is he will stay as he is, but if you treat him as if he were what he . . . could be [and might be], he will [become what he ought to be].”⁷

Make Homes Places of Devotion

Elder Boyd K. Packer stated: “To bring some of the things of heaven into the home is to insure that family members will graduate to church participation. The family home evening is, of course, ready-made for this—a meeting at home that can be organized to fit every need; and it’s just as much a church meeting, or can be, as those held at the chapel.”⁸

This counsel also agrees with what Elder Dean L. Larsen has told us: "Our church buildings are not the only places where we can worship. Our homes should also be places of devotion. It would be well if each day we could 'go home to church.' There should be no other place where the Spirit of the Lord is more welcome and more easily accessible than in our own homes."⁹

As we work to accomplish all of this in our homes, we will do well to remember the important statement of President Harold B. Lee: "Remember

that the most important of the Lord's work that you [and I] will ever do will be . . . within the walls of [our] own home."¹⁰

My plea today is that each of us will look carefully at our homes and at the kitchen table and continually strive to bring heaven into our homes and come unto Jesus Christ.

From an address by Elder Curtis in the April 1995 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 109–11; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 82–83).

NOTES

1. "Scriptures As They Relate to Family Stability," *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, 57.
2. "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth," *Hymns*, no. 298.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74–75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54.
4. *Pathways to Perfection* (1973), 26–27.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 12.
6. In "President Howard W. Hunter: Fourteenth President of the Church," *Ensign*, July 1994, 4–5.
7. In Emerson Roy West, *Vital Quotations* (1968), 171.
8. "Begin Where You Are—At Home," *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, 71.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 63.
10. *Strengthening the Home* (pamphlet, 1973), 7.

TEACHING GOSPEL PRINCIPLES TO CHILDREN

13

PART 1

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- Read Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28. As you read, identify the principles and ordinances the Lord has commanded parents to teach their children. Plan a few things you can do to teach these principles and ordinances to your children or to grandchildren, nieces and nephews, or other children you know.
- As you read the following article, choose to focus on one or two of the suggestions given by Elder Robert D. Hales. As different opportunities arise, focus on other suggestions from the article.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES: OUR SACRED DUTY

Elder Robert D. Hales
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Spirit Strengthens Families

Strengthening families is our sacred duty as parents, children, extended family members, leaders, teachers, and individual members of the Church.

The importance of spiritually strengthening families is taught clearly in the scriptures. Father Adam and Mother Eve taught their sons and daughters the gospel. The sacrifices of Abel were accepted by the Lord, whom he loved. Cain, on the other hand, “loved Satan more than God” and committed serious sins. Adam and Eve “mourned before the Lord, because of Cain and his brethren,” but they never ceased to teach their children the gospel (see Moses 5:12, 18, 20, 27; 6:1, 58).

We must understand that each of our children comes with varying gifts and talents. Some, like Abel, seem to be given gifts of faith at birth. Others struggle with every decision they make. As parents, we should never let the searching and struggling of our children make us waver or lose our faith in the Lord.

Alma the Younger, when “racked with torment . . . [and] harrowed up by the memory of [his] many sins,” remembered hearing his father teach about the coming of “Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world” (Alma 36:17). His father’s words

led to his conversion. In like manner, our teaching and testimony will be remembered by our children.

The 2,000 stripling warriors in the army of Helaman testified that their righteous mothers had powerfully taught gospel principles to them (see Alma 56:47–48).

At a time of great spiritual searching, Enos said, “The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life . . . sunk deep into my heart” (Enos 1:3).

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord says that parents are to teach their children “to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old. . . .

“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:25, 28).

Teaching the Gospel Strengthens Families

As we teach our children the gospel through word and example, our families are spiritually strengthened and fortified.

The words of living prophets are clear regarding our sacred duty to strengthen our families spiritually. In 1995 the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles issued a proclamation to the world, declaring that “the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . . Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility

to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, [and] to observe the commandments of God" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

In February of this year, the First Presidency issued a call to all parents "to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility."

In the February letter, the First Presidency taught that by teaching and rearing children in gospel principles, parents can protect their families from corrosive elements. They further counseled parents and children "to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" (First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999; cited in *Church News*, 27 Feb. 1999, 3).

With the help of the Lord and His doctrine, all the hurtful effects from challenges a family may meet can be understood and overcome. Whatever the needs of family members may be, we can strengthen our families as we follow the counsel given by prophets.

The key to strengthening our families is having the Spirit of the Lord come into our homes. The goal of our families is to be on the strait and narrow path.

Ideas for Strengthening Families

Countless things can be done within the walls of our homes to strengthen the family. May I share a few ideas that may help identify the areas that need strengthening in our own families. I offer them in a spirit of encouragement, knowing that each family—and each family member—is unique.

Homes Should Be a Safe Place

- Make our homes a safe place where each family member feels love and a sense of belonging. Realize that each child has varying gifts and abilities; each is an individual requiring special love and care.
- Remember, "a soft answer turneth away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1). When my sweetheart and I were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple, Elder Harold B. Lee gave us wise counsel: "When you raise your voice

in anger, the Spirit departs from your home." We must never, out of anger, lock the door of our home or our heart to our children. Like the prodigal son, our children need to know that when they come to themselves they can turn to us for love and counsel.

- Spend individual time with our children, letting them choose the activity and the subject of conversation. Block out distractions.

Teach Children to Pray, Read the Scriptures, and Listen to Worthy Music

- Encourage our children's private religious behavior, such as personal prayer, personal scripture study, and fasting for specific needs. Measure their spiritual growth by observing their demeanor, language, and conduct toward others.
- Pray daily with our children.
- Read the scriptures together. I remember my own mother and father reading the scriptures as we children sat on the floor and listened. Sometimes they would ask, "What does that scripture mean to you?" or "How does it make you feel?" Then they would listen to us as we responded in our own words.
- Read the words of the living prophets and other inspiring articles for children, youth, and adults in Church magazines.
- We can fill our homes with the sound of worthy music as we sing together from the hymnbook and the *Children's Songbook*.

Hold Family Home Evening and Family Councils

- Hold family home evening every week. As parents, we are sometimes too intimidated to teach or testify to our children. I have been guilty of that in my own life. Our children need to have us share spiritual feelings with them and to teach and bear testimony to them.
- Hold family councils to discuss family plans and concerns. Some of the most effective family councils are one-on-one with each family member. Help our children know their ideas are important. Listen to them and learn from them.

Share the Gospel, Support Church Leaders, and Participate as a Family

- Invite missionaries to teach less-active or non-member friends in our homes.
- Show that we sustain and support Church leaders.
- Eat together when possible, and have meaningful mealtime discussions.

- Work together as a family, even if it may be faster and easier to do the job ourselves. Talk with our sons and daughters as we work together. I had that opportunity every Saturday with my father.

Teach Children to Be Good Friends and Prepare for the Future

- Help our children learn how to build good friendships and make their friends feel welcome in our homes. Get to know the parents of the friends of our children.
- Teach our children by example how to budget time and resources. Help them learn self-reliance and the importance of preparing for the future.

Share Heritage and Family Traditions

- Teach our children the history of our ancestors and of our own family history.
- Build family traditions. Plan and carry out meaningful vacations together, considering our children's needs, talents, and abilities. Help them create happy memories, improve their talents, and build their feelings of self-worth.

Teach the Importance of Obeying the Commandments and Receiving Ordinances

- By word and example, teach moral values and a commitment to obeying the commandments.
- After my baptism and confirmation, my mother drew me aside and asked, "What do you feel?" I described as best I could the warm feeling of peace, comfort, and happiness I had. Mother explained that what I was feeling was the gift I had just received, the gift of the Holy Ghost. She told me that if I lived worthy of it, I would have that gift with me continually. That was a teaching moment that has lived with me all my life.

Teach our children the significance of baptism and confirmation, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, partaking of the sacrament, honoring the priesthood, and making and keeping temple covenants. They need to know the importance of living worthy of a temple recommend and preparing for a temple marriage.

- If you have not yet been sealed in the temple to your spouse or children, work as a family to receive temple blessings. Set temple goals as a family.
- Be worthy of the priesthood which you hold, brethren, and use it to bless the lives of your family. . . .

Be Aware of Community, School, and Church Activities

Resources are available outside the home. Wise use of them will strengthen our families.

- Encourage our children to serve in the Church and community.
- Talk to our children's teachers, coaches, counselors, advisers, and Church leaders about our concerns and the needs of our children.
- Know what our children are doing in their spare time. Influence their choice of movies, television programs, and videos. If they are on the Internet, know what they are doing. Help them see the importance of wholesome entertainment.
- Encourage worthwhile school activities. Know what our children are studying. Help them with their homework. Help them realize the importance of education and of preparing for employment and self-sufficiency.
- Young women: Attend Relief Society when you reach your 18th birthday. Some of you may be reluctant to make that transition. You may fear that you won't fit in. My young sisters, this is not the case. There is much in Relief Society for you. It can be a blessing to you throughout your life.
- Young men: Honor the Aaronic Priesthood. It is the preparatory priesthood, preparing you for the Melchizedek Priesthood. Become fully active in the elders quorum when you are ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood. The brotherhood, the quorum instruction, and the opportunities to serve others will bless you and your family throughout your life.

Follow the Lord's Example of Love

Every family can be strengthened in one way or another if the Spirit of the Lord is brought into our homes and we teach by His example.

- Act with faith; don't react with fear. When our teenagers begin testing family values, parents need to go to the Lord for guidance on the specific needs of each family member. This is the time for added love and support and to reinforce your teachings on how to make choices. It is frightening to allow our children to learn from the mistakes they may make, but their willingness to choose the Lord's way and family values is greater when the choice comes from within than when we attempt to force those values upon them. The Lord's way of love and acceptance is better than Satan's way of force and coercion, especially in rearing teenagers.

- Remember the Prophet Joseph Smith's words: "Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 240).

Children Who Stray Will Return

- While we may despair when, after all we can do, some of our children stray from the path of righteousness, the words of Orson F. Whitney can comfort us: "Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving [mother's and] father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for [our] careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with [our] faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God" (quoting Joseph Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110).

Single Adults and Extended Family Can Lend Strength

- What if you are single or have not been blessed with children? Do you need to be concerned about the counsel regarding families? Yes. It is something we all need to learn in earth life. Unmarried adult members can often lend a special kind of strength to the family, becoming a tremendous source of support, acceptance, and love to their families and the families of those around them.
- Many adult members of the extended family do much parenting in their own right. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, cousins, and other family members can have great impact on the family. I want to express my appreciation for those in my own extended

family who have guided me by their example and testimony. Sometimes extended family members can say things parents cannot say without starting an argument. After a long heart-to-heart discussion with her mother, one young woman said: "It would be awful to tell you and Dad I had done something wrong. But it would be worse to tell Aunt Susan. I just couldn't let her down."

No Perfect Families

Knowing that we are in mortality to learn and to develop our faith, we should understand that there must be opposition in all things. During a family council in my own home, my wife said, "When you may think that someone has a perfect family, you just do not know them well enough."

Set House and Family in Order

Brothers and sisters, as parents let us heed the admonition, even the rebuke, given by the Lord to Joseph Smith and the leaders of the Church in 1833 to "set in order [our] own house" (D&C 93:43). "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40). "Set in order [our] family, and see that they are more diligent and concerned at home, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place" (D&C 93:50).

The prophets of our day have given a similar admonition and warning to parents to set in order our families. May we be blessed with the inspiration and love to meet opposition with faith within our families. We will then know that our trials are to draw us closer to the Lord and to one another. May we listen to a prophet's voice and set in order our own homes (see D&C 93:41–49). The family is strengthened as we draw near to the Lord, and each member of the family is strengthened as we lift and strengthen and love and care for one another. "Thee lift me and I'll lift thee, and we'll ascend together" (Quaker proverb).

May we be able to welcome and maintain the Spirit of the Lord in our homes to strengthen our families. That each of our family members can stay on the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:18), I pray.

From an address by Elder Hales in the April 1999 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 39–44; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 32–34).

TEACHING GOSPEL PRINCIPLES TO CHILDREN

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PART 2

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or more of these suggestions.

- As a family, plan an activity in which you will give service together.
- Do a household job with one of your children or with a grandchild, a niece or nephew, or another child in your family. Talk with the child while you work. Take advantage of teaching opportunities without being critical of the child's efforts to help.
- Read the following sections in the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* (34285): "Media: Movies, Television, Radio, Videocassettes, Books, and Magazines" (pages 11–12), "Music and Dancing" (pages 13–14), and "Sexual Purity" (pages 14–16). After you have reviewed the material, determine which of your children would benefit from reading and discussing this material with you.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

TEACH THE CHILDREN

President Boyd K. Packer
Acting President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles

The number of people assembled here and at other locations attests to the unquenchable thirst for truth that accompanies membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

As I prayed over what would be of most worth to you, it occurred to me that in three weeks I will reach my 75th birthday and move into what I choose to call *upper middle age*.

I have been a teacher for more than 50 years. Surely something I have learned will be helpful to you.

I have learned this from experience: Life will teach us some things we didn't think we wanted to know. These hard lessons can be the most valuable ones.

I learned something else about learning on my way to *upper middle age*. Consider this conversation between a doctor and a patient:

Doctor: "How can I help you? What seems to be your problem?"

Patient: "It is my memory, doctor. I read something, and I can't remember it. I can't remember why I came into a room. I can't remember where I put things."

Doctor: "Well, tell me, how long has this condition been bothering you?"

Patient: "How long has what condition been bothering me?"

Now, if that amused you, you are either under 60 or you are laughing at yourselves.

Teaching Children While They're Young

When you grow older, you cannot learn or memorize or study like you could when you were young. Could that be why the prophet Alma counseled, "Learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God"?¹

It is increasingly difficult for me to memorize scriptures and lines of poetry. In my youth I could repeat something a time or two and remember it. If I said it over many times, particularly if I wrote it down, it was quite permanently recorded in my mind.

Youth is the time for easy learning. That is why the teachers of children and youth have been such a concern for the leaders of the Church from the very beginning.

It is consummately important to teach the gospel and life's lessons to children and youth.

The Lord places the first responsibility upon parents and warns them:

“Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, . . . that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”²

It is the basic purpose of this Church to teach the youth: first in the home and then in church.

Storing Up Knowledge

Another thing I have learned has to do with remembering what we learned when we were young. Knowledge stored in young minds may wait many years for the moment when it might be needed.

Let me illustrate. I am very concerned about the tendency of members to disregard the counsel of the bishop or, at the other extreme, to become overdependent upon him.

I decided to speak in general conference about the bishop.

I prayerfully prepared, and there came to mind a conversation from 50 years past. It served my need as a teacher—served it perfectly. I quote now that conversation just as I did in general conference:

“Years ago I served on a stake high council with Emery Wight. For 10 years Emery had served as bishop of rural Harper Ward. His wife, Lucille, became our stake Relief Society president.

“Lucille told me that one spring morning a neighbor called at her door and asked for Emery. She told him that he was out plowing. The neighbor then spoke with great concern. Earlier that morning he had passed the field and noticed Emery’s team of horses standing in a half-finished furrow with the reins draped over the plow. Emery was nowhere in sight. The neighbor thought nothing of it until much later when he passed the field again, and the team had not moved. He climbed the fence and crossed the field to the horses. Emery was nowhere to be found. He hurried to the house to check with Lucille.

“Lucille calmly replied, ‘Oh, don’t be alarmed. No doubt someone is in trouble and came to get the bishop.’

“The image of that team of horses standing for hours in the field symbolizes the dedication of the bishops in the Church and of the counselors who stand by their side. Every bishop and every counselor, figuratively speaking, leaves his team standing in an unfinished furrow when someone needs help.”³

I had never before used that experience in a talk—never thought of it.

I wanted to fix it in my mind before speaking of it in conference, so I located a daughter of Emery Wight. She agreed to meet me at their old home and show me the field her father would have been plowing that day.

One of my sons took me there early one Sunday morning. He took a number of pictures.

It was a beautiful spring morning. The field was newly plowed, just as it had been those many years before. Seagulls were feeding in the newly turned soil.

That quickened memory, remembering that conversation, is not uncommon to me. It reaffirms the truth of the scripture—one, incidentally, I memorized in my youth—

“Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man.”⁴

There follows a promise to those who treasure up knowledge:

“Whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”⁵

It was a good lesson for me, but my lesson did not end there.

I had done some painting and wood carving in my youth. I was largely self-taught. While the children were growing up, my time was devoted to teaching them things I had learned about life and about carving and painting when I was a boy.

After they were grown, I took up wood carving as a means of relaxation. I carved birds and spent many hours on a carving. When asked, “How many hours did it take you to carve this?” I always answered, “I don’t know. If I found out, I would quit.”

During those hours working with my hands, I pondered on the marvels of creation, and inspiration would flow. As I carved wood, I carved out talks.

Carving was restful to me. Sometimes when I got a little stressed and cranky, my wife would say, “Well, you had better start another carving.”

I suppose if my *upper middle age* memory sharpened itself a bit, I could point to one of those carvings and tell which talk it represents. I learned that in those quiet moments I could do two things at once.

Reaping a Harvest from Teaching

I am no longer able to do those carvings. That work is too delicate for me with trifocals and finger joints that now stiffen a bit from childhood polio. Besides, the increasing pressure of my calling limits the time I can devote both to carving and to preparing talks.

The ability to carve now is largely lost to me, but not to our children. We taught them when they were young.

The image of that team standing in the field stayed with me. I thought that perhaps I could do a painting of the bishop's team standing in the field with the reins draped over the plow.

I hesitated because it had been nine years since I had painted a picture. Two friends with unusual talent and inspiration offered to help me paint the bishop's team, and July gave a respite from travel, so I began.

I learned much from those two friends, and in a real way they are in my painting. But I received more help from my two sons. One son took those pictures of the plowed field, for I try always to be very accurate when depicting something in *wood* or on *canvas* or with *words*.

That is another lesson. I could draw back from our children something they had learned when they were young.

The other son decided to do a sculpture of the bishop's team to be cast in bronze as a companion to my painting. We spent many rewarding hours helping one another.

He took from our barn a couple of old harnesses which have hung essentially untouched for over 50 years. He dusted them off and took them home. He draped one harness over a very patient riding horse. It stood quietly as he arranged the harness in proper order and made detailed sketches of it.

His neighbor had collected some old plows. Among them was a plow of proper vintage, which he also sketched.

And so there came back that which we had given those sons in their youth. As with our other children, they have improved on that which we as parents taught them when they were very young. And if our days are prolonged upon the earth, there comes a second harvest—our grandchildren—and perhaps a third.

Reawakening Dormant Talents

I relearned something else. Once before I had painted a picture inspired by comments that I

heard when I was a boy. It depicted the Willard Peaks. I had heard the older folks refer to them as *The Presidency*. These three gigantic, solid peaks standing against the sky typified the leaders of the Church.

That was nine years ago. My son had taken me to Willard, Utah, and photographed the peaks. We went back a second time when there would be more shadow and contrast.

After those years I had to awaken that which I had let go dormant. At first it was a terrible struggle. I threatened to quit several times. One of my friends urged me on by saying, "Go ahead! There's always plenty of room at the bottom."

I did not quit, simply because my wife would not give me permission to do so. I am glad I didn't now. Perhaps, now that I am into it again, I'll do another painting sometime—who knows.

I suppose trying to get back into painting is not unlike someone who has been inactive in the Church for many years and decides to return to the fold. There is that period of struggle in getting the feel for what has lain dormant but is not really lost. And it helps to have a friend or two.

That is another principle of learning—drawing lessons from ordinary experience in life.

That painting of *The Bishop's Team* will soon be finished. My son's sculpture is at the foundry being cast in bronze.

His sculpture, incidentally, is much better than my painting. That is as it should be. His young fingers and mind respond more readily than mine do.

As we move to *upper middle age* we learn that old bones don't bend easily, older joints don't move so quickly. It is not easy to tie your shoes once you move past your middle 60s—then they lower the floors.

There comes that lesson again, "Learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God."⁶

"The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth."⁷

"I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth."⁸

The supernal gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred upon our children when they are only eight years of age.

"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall *teach* you *all* things, and bring *all* things to your *remembrance*, whatsoever I have said unto you."⁹

Notice the words *teach* and *remembrance*.

Teaching children brings its own reward. Have you not yet learned that when you teach you learn more from teaching than do your children from learning?

Drawing on Spiritual Memories

There is a difference between acquiring temporal knowledge and acquiring spiritual knowledge. Students learn that on test day. It is awfully hard to remember something you didn't learn in the first place.

That is true of temporal knowledge, but spiritually we can draw on a memory that goes back beyond birth. We may develop a sensitivity to things that were not understood when we were younger.

The poet Wordsworth felt something about pre-mortal life when he wrote,

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.¹⁰*

I drew those lines from my memory, where I stored them during an English class in my college days.

The most important lessons come from ordinary events in life.

Some wait for compelling spiritual experiences to confirm their testimony. It doesn't work that way. It is the quiet promptings and impressions of ordinary things that give us the assurance of our identity as children of God. We live far below our privileges when we seek after signs and look "beyond the mark"¹¹ for marvelous events.

We are children of God, for we lived with Him in the premortal existence. From time to time that curtain is parted. There comes to us the intimation of who we are and of our place in the eternal scheme of things. Call that memory or spiritual insight, it is one of those testimonies that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true. Such revelations come when we are teaching.

I once heard President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) say, "I always know when I am speaking under the influence of the Holy Ghost because I always learn something from what I have said."

The Lord told the elders:

"Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit;

"And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power, that ye may give even as I have spoken."¹²

Even when the harvest of converts is meager for missionaries, a spiritual power comes to them and to the Church because they learn through their teaching.

The president of a quorum of deacons is to sit in council and teach his fellow deacons.¹³ The president of a quorum of elders is to teach the members of his quorum according to the covenants.¹⁴

Paul told Timothy, "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."¹⁵

He explained in nine words how teaching becomes its own reward:

"Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preacheest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

"Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?"¹⁶

Being a Willing Learner

The other day I received a letter of apology, as I have on many occasions. It came from someone I do not know. This letter told how resentful and angry that member had been for a long period of time toward me because of a talk I had given. It was a request for forgiveness.

I am quick to forgive. I am only an agent both in giving the talk and in extending forgiveness.

The scriptures contain many references revealing how "hard"¹⁷ to bear the teachings of the prophets and apostles were for the Israelites and for the Nephites. It is so easy to resist the teaching and resent the teacher. That has been the lot of the prophets and apostles from the beginning.

One of the Beatitudes teaches that:

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."¹⁸

Typically those letters of apology say, "I could not understand why you felt the need to make me feel so uncomfortable and so guilty." Then, out of their struggle, there emerges an insight, an inspiration, an understanding of causes and effects. Finally they come to see and understand why the gospel is as it is.

I mention one among several subjects. A sister may finally come to see why we stress the importance of mothers staying at home with their children. She understands that no service equals the exalting refinement which comes through unselfish motherhood. Nor does she need to forgo intellectual or cultural or social refinement. Those things are fitted in—in proper time—for they attend the everlasting virtue which comes from teaching children.

No teaching is equal, more spiritually rewarding, or more exalting than that of a mother teaching her children. A mother may feel inadequate in scripture scholarship because she is occupied in teaching her family. She will not receive a lesser reward.

President Grant Bangerter was having a doctrinal conversation with President Joseph Fielding Smith, who was touring his mission in Brazil. Sister Bangerter listened and finally said, “President Smith, I have been raising children and haven’t had time to become a scriptorian like he is. Will I get to the celestial kingdom with Grant?”

President Smith pondered soberly for a moment and then said, “Well, perhaps if you bake him a pie.”

A man will be hard pressed to equal that measure of spiritual refinement that accrues naturally to his wife as she teaches their children. And if he understands the gospel at all, he knows that he cannot be exalted without her.¹⁹ His best hope is to lead out as an attentive, responsible partner in teaching their children.

Blessings to Teachers

Now, consider this promise:

“Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend *you* [the teacher], that you [the teacher, the mother, the father] may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you [the mother, the father] to understand.”²⁰

Notice the promise is to the teacher rather than to the student.

“Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you [who teach your children or Primary, Sunday School, Young Women and Men, priesthood, seminary, Relief Society],” that you may come to know:

“Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the

judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

“That ye [who teach] may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.”²¹

Paul prophesied to young Timothy “that in the last days perilous times shall come.”²² He said, “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”²³

But we can still be safe. Our safety is in teaching the children:

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”²⁴

Paul counseled Timothy:

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

“And that from a *child* thou hast *known the holy scriptures*, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”²⁵

This is the Church of Jesus Christ. It is His Church. He is our Exemplar, our Redeemer. We are commanded to be “even as he is.”²⁶

He was a teacher of children. He commanded His disciples at Jerusalem to “suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”²⁷

In the account of the Savior’s ministry among the Nephites, we can see deeper into His soul perhaps than at any other place:

“And it came to pass that he commanded that their little children should be brought.

“So they brought their little children and set them down upon the ground round about him, and Jesus stood in the midst; and the multitude gave way till they had all been brought unto him. . . .

“ . . . He wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again;

“And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

“And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.

“And the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear.”²⁸

I know that record is true. I bear witness of Him and bless all of you who teach children in His name.

From an address given at a Brigham Young University Education Week devotional on 17 August 1999 (see *Ensign*, Feb. 2000, 10–17).

NOTES

1. Alma 37:35.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
3. “The Bishop and His Counselors,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 57.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:85.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
6. Alma 37:35.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
9. John 14:26; italics added.
10. “Ode: Intimations of Immortality,” stanza 5.
11. Jacob 4:14.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 43:15–16.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:85.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:89.
15. 2 Timothy 2:2.
16. Romans 2:21–22; italics added.
17. See John 6:60; 1 Nephi 16:2; 2 Nephi 9:40; Helaman 14:10.
18. Matthew 5:11–12; see also Luke 21:12; John 15:20; 3 Nephi 12:12.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4, 132:19–21.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 88:78; italics added.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 88:79–80.
22. 2 Timothy 3:1.
23. 2 Timothy 3:13.
24. Proverbs 22:6.
25. 2 Timothy 3:14–15; italics added.
26. 1 John 3:7.
27. Matthew 19:14.
28. 3 Nephi 17:11–12, 21–25.

GUIDING CHILDREN AS THEY MAKE DECISIONS

15

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or both of these suggestions.

- In the reading assignment below, Elder M. Russell Ballard gives four suggestions to help us “build a fortress of faith in our homes and . . . prepare our youth to be clean and chaste and pure, completely worthy to enter the temple.” Review his suggestions and make specific plans to follow these suggestions in your home.
- Think of the decisions that each child in your family might face in school, at home, and in other settings. Consider what you can do to help prepare each child to make righteous decisions.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following article. If you are married, read and discuss the article with your spouse.

LIKE A FLAME UNQUENCHABLE

Elder M. Russell Ballard
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Joy of Temple Marriage

Occasionally I have the privilege of officiating in the temple when two worthy young people are married and sealed in the house of the Lord. These are always special times for family and friends. The feeling at such times is a sweet and satisfying mix of earthly happiness and eternal joy seen in the tear-filled eyes of mothers who have prayed for this day with all of their hearts. You see it in the eyes of fathers who, for the first time in months, are thinking about something besides how to pay for all of the expenses. But mostly you see it in the eyes of a virtuous bride and groom who have lived true to the teachings of the gospel, shunning the temptations of the world. There is a special, undeniable feeling available to those who have remained clean and pure and chaste.

Morality Standards Are Absolute

Too many of our young men and women are succumbing to the pressures imposed by a world saturated with evil messages and immoral behavior. Lucifer is waging a vicious war for the souls of young and old alike, and the casualty count is climbing. The standards of the world have shifted like the sands of a windblown desert. That which was once unheard of or unacceptable is now commonplace.

The world’s perspective has been so dramatically altered that those who choose to adhere to traditional standards of morality are viewed as strange, almost as though they must justify their desire to keep the commandments of God.

But one thing is certain: the commandments have not changed. Let there be no mistake about that. Right is still right. Wrong is still wrong, no matter how cleverly cloaked in respectability or political correctness. We believe in chastity before marriage and fidelity ever after. That standard is an absolute standard of truth. It is neither subject to public opinion polls nor dependent upon situation or circumstance. There is no need to debate it or other gospel standards.

Building Fortresses of Faith in the Home

But there is a desperate need for parents, leaders, and teachers to help our youth learn to understand, love, value, and live the standards of the gospel. Parents and youth must stand together in defense against a clever and devious adversary. We must be just as dedicated, effective, and determined in our efforts to live the gospel as he is in his efforts to destroy it—and us.

The challenge before us is great. At risk are the immortal souls of those we love. May I suggest four ways we can build a fortress of faith in our homes and particularly help prepare our youth to be clean and chaste and pure, completely worthy to enter the temple.

Teach Children the Gospel

The first is gospel information. The most important, life-changing information that I know of is the knowledge that we are truly children of God our Eternal Father. This is not only doctrinally correct, it is spiritually vital. Said the Savior in His powerful intercessory prayer, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). To know Heavenly Father and to understand our relationship to Him as our Father and our God is to find meaning in this life and hope in the life to come. Our families need to know He is real, that we are in fact His sons and His daughters and heirs to all that He has, now and forever. Secure in that knowledge, family members will be less likely to look for devilish diversions and more likely to look to God and live (see Numbers 21:8).

Live by Covenant, Not Convenience

Somehow we need to instill in our hearts the powerful testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ like unto that of our pioneer forefathers. Remember when Nauvoo fell in September of 1846 and the unbearable conditions of the Saints in the poor camps. When word reached Winter Quarters, Brigham Young immediately called the brethren together. After explaining the situation and reminding them of the covenant made in the Nauvoo Temple that no one who wanted to come, no matter how poor, would be left behind, he gave them this remarkable challenge:

“Now is the time for labor,” he said. “*Let the fire of the covenant which you made in the House of the Lord, burn in your hearts, like flame unquenchable*” (To the High Council at Council Point, 27 Sept. 1846, Brigham Young Papers, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1; italics added). Within a few days, in spite of near-destitute conditions at Winter Quarters, many wagons were rolling eastward to rescue the Saints in the poor camps along the Mississippi River.

We often hear of the suffering and the sacrifice those early Saints endured, and we ask ourselves, How did they do it? What was it that gave them such strength? Part of the answer lies in President Young’s powerful words. Those early Latter-day Saints had made covenants with God, and those covenants burned like unquenchable fire in their hearts.

Sometimes we are tempted to let our lives be governed more by convenience than by covenant. It is not always convenient to live gospel standards and stand up for truth and testify of the Restoration. It

usually is not convenient to share the gospel with others. It isn’t always convenient to respond to a calling in the Church, especially one that stretches our abilities. Opportunities to serve others in meaningful ways, as we have covenanted to do, rarely come at convenient times. But there is no spiritual power in living by convenience. The power comes as we keep our covenants. As we look at the lives of these early Saints, we see that their covenants were the primary force in their lives. Their example and testimony were powerful enough to influence generation after generation of their children.

Teach Children about Morality

As our children grow, they need information taught by parents more directly and plainly about what is and is not appropriate. Parents need to teach children to avoid any pornographic photographs or stories. Children and youth need to know from parents that pornography of any kind is a tool of the devil; and if anyone flirts with it, it has the power to addict, dull, and even destroy the human spirit. They need to be taught not to use vulgar language and never to use the Lord’s name in vain. Crude jokes overheard should never be repeated. Teach family members not to listen to music that celebrates the sensual. Talk to them plainly about sex and the teaching of the gospel regarding chastity. Let this information come from parents in the home in an appropriate way. All family members need to know the rules and be fortified spiritually so they can keep them. And when mistakes are made, the wondrous Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ must be understood and accepted so that through the complete and sometimes difficult process of repentance, forgiveness and continued hope for the future can be obtained. We must never give up our individual and family quest for eternal life.

Unfortunately, far too many parents in today’s world have abdicated the responsibility to teach these values and other Church doctrines to their families, believing that others will do it: the peer group, the school, Church leaders and teachers, or even the media. Every day our children are learning, filling their minds and hearts with experiences and perceptions that deeply influence personal value systems.

Fortify Each Other against Wickedness

Brothers and sisters, we need to instruct one another and instill deeper faith in our hearts to fortify ourselves with the courage to keep the commandments in a world of ever-increasing wickedness. We need to become so deeply converted to the gospel of Christ that the fire of the covenant will

burn in our hearts like flame unquenchable. And with that kind of faith we will do what is necessary to remain true and worthy.

Communicate Openly with Children

Second is communication. Nothing is more important to the relationship between family members than open, honest communication. This is particularly true for parents trying to teach gospel principles and standards to their children. The ability to counsel with our youth—and perhaps more importantly, to really listen to their concerns—is the foundation upon which successful relationships are built. Often what we see in the eyes and what we feel in the heart will communicate far more than what we hear or say. A word to you children: Never be disrespectful to your parents. You must also learn to listen, especially to the counsel of your mom and dad and to the promptings of the Spirit. We need to watch for and capture the special teaching moments that constantly occur within our family relationships, and we need to resolve now to hold family home evening every Monday night.

There are powerful moments of communication through regular family prayer and through family scripture study. The scriptures will help define family values and goals, and talking together about them will assist family members to learn to become individually secure, spiritually strong, and self-reliant. This requires time, and so we need to counsel together about how much television, how many movies, videos, video games, time on the Internet, or out-of-the-home activities should be allowed.

Parents and Leaders Should Intervene

Third is intervention. It is the parents' duty to intervene when they see wrong choices being made. That doesn't mean parents take from children the precious gift of agency. Because agency is a God-given gift, ultimately the choice of what they will do, how they will behave, and what they will believe will always be theirs. But as parents we need to make sure they understand appropriate behavior and the consequences to them if they pursue their wrongful course. Remember, there is no such thing as unlawful censorship in the home. Movies, magazines, television, videos, the Internet, and other media are there as guests and should only be welcomed when they are appropriate for family enjoyment. Make your home a haven of peace and righteousness. Don't allow evil influences to contaminate your own special spiritual environment. Be kind, thoughtful, gentle, and considerate in what you say and how you treat each other. Then family goals based

on gospel standards will make it easier to make good decisions.

The same principle applies to you bishops, teachers, and other leaders in the Church as you work to assist families. You don't have to stand idly by as those over whom you have stewardship make poor moral choices. When one of our youth stands at a moral crossroad in life, almost always there is someone—a parent, a leader, a teacher—who could make a difference by intervening with love and kindness.

Be a Good Example to Children

Fourth is example. Just as it is difficult for a weary sailor to find his way across uncharted seas without the aid of a compass, it is almost impossible for children and youth to find their way through the seas of life without the guiding light of a good example. We cannot expect them to avoid those things that are inappropriate if they see their parents compromising principles and failing to live the gospel.

As parents, teachers, and leaders, it is our solemn duty to set a powerful, personal example of righteous strength, courage, sacrifice, unselfish service, and self-control. These are the traits that will help our youth hold on to the iron rod of the gospel and remain on the straight and narrow path.

Living the Gospel Helps Avoid Mistakes

I wish I could tell you that focusing on information, communication, intervention, and example would always result in a perfect family with perfect children who never stray from gospel standards. That is, unfortunately, not the case. But families that know, teach, and live gospel principles and standards are more likely to spare themselves the pain of serious mistakes. When long-established patterns of positive communication and faithful example prevail, it is much easier to counsel together about personal problems and to work through the necessary changes that will bless every family member.

Listen to King Benjamin's significant counsel:

"I cannot tell you all the things whereby [you] may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

"But this much I can tell you, that if [you] do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not" (Mosiah 4:29–30).

My brothers and sisters, may God bless every one of us that the fire of our covenants may burn in our hearts like a flame unquenchable. May we be prepared spiritually to renew our sacred covenants each week as we partake of the sacrament. That we will honor the Lord and we will be anxious to do our

part in these most exciting and great days, to build up His Church by strengthening our families is my humble prayer.

From an address by Elder Ballard in the April 1999 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 111–15; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 85–87).

FAMILY PRAYER, FAMILY SCRIPTURE STUDY, AND FAMILY HOME EVENING

16

IDEAS FOR APPLICATION

According to your own needs and circumstances, follow one or more of these suggestions.

- If your family holds regular family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evening, prayerfully consider ways you might improve in one or more of these settings. If your family does not do these things, consider what you will do to help establish these activities in your home.
- As a family, plan an activity you can do together. Consider referring to the ideas on pages 265–340 of the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106).
- Review the material on pages 137–39 of *Teaching, No Greater Call* (36123).

READING ASSIGNMENT

Study the following articles. If you are married, read and discuss the articles with your spouse.

THE BLESSINGS OF FAMILY PRAYER

President Gordon B. Hinckley
First Counselor in the First Presidency

The Apostle Paul declared to Timothy:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

“Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

“Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

There needs to be a new emphasis on honesty, character, and integrity in our time. Only as we build again into the fiber of our lives the virtues that are the essence of true civilization will the pattern of our times change. The question that confronts us is, Where shall we begin?

I am satisfied that it must begin with recognition of God as our Eternal Father, of our relationship to Him as His children, with communication with Him in recognition of His sovereign position, and with daily supplication for His guidance in our affairs.

I submit that a return to the old pattern of prayer, family prayer in the homes of the people, is one of the basic medications that would check the dread disease that is eroding the character of our society. We could not expect a miracle in a day, but in a generation we would have a miracle.

A generation or two ago, family prayer in the homes of Christian people throughout the world was as much a part of the day’s activity as was eating. As that practice has diminished, the moral decay discussed by the Apostle Paul has ensued.

I feel satisfied that there is no adequate substitute for the morning and evening practice of kneeling together—father, mother, and children. This, more than soft carpets, more than lovely draperies, more than cleverly balanced color schemes, is the thing that will make for better and more beautiful homes.

There is something in the very posture of kneeling that contradicts the attitudes described by Paul: “proud . . . heady, highminded.”

There is something in the very practice of father and mother and children kneeling together that evaporates others of those qualities he described: “disobedient to parents, . . . without natural affection.”

There is something in the act of addressing Deity that offsets a tendency toward blasphemy and toward becoming lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

The inclination to be unholy, as Paul described it, to be unthankful, is erased as together family members thank the Lord for life and peace and all they have. And as they thank the Lord for one another, there is developed within the family a new appreciation, a new respect, a new affection one for another.

The scripture declares: "Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things" (D&C 59:7). And again: "In nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand" (D&C 59:21).

In remembering together before the Lord the poor, the needy, and the oppressed, there is developed, unconsciously but realistically, a love for others above self, a respect for others, a desire to serve the needs of others. One cannot ask God to help a neighbor in distress without feeling motivated to do something oneself toward helping that neighbor. What miracles would happen in the lives of the children of the world if they would lay aside their own selfishness and lose themselves in the service of others. The seed from which this sheltering and fruitful tree may grow is best planted and nurtured in the daily supplications of the family.

I know of no better way to inculcate love for country than for parents to pray before their children for the land in which they live, invoking the blessings of the Almighty upon it that it may be preserved in liberty and in peace. I know of no better way to build within the hearts of our children a much-needed respect for authority than remembering in the daily supplications of the family the leaders of our respective countries who carry the burdens of government.

I remember seeing on a billboard a statement that read, "A nation at prayer is a nation at peace." I believe this.

I know of nothing that will so much help to ease family tensions, that in a subtle way will bring about the respect for parents which leads to obedience, that will affect the spirit of repentance which will largely erase the blight of broken homes, than will praying together, confessing weaknesses together before the Lord, and invoking the blessings of the Lord upon the home and those who dwell there.

I have long been impressed with a statement made by a man long since dead. James H. Moyle wrote to his grandchildren concerning the family prayer of his own home. He said: "We have not gone to bed before kneeling in prayer to supplicate divine guidance and approval. Differences may arise in the best governed families, but they will be dissipated by the . . . spirit of prayer. . . . Its very

psychology tends to promote the more righteous life among men. It tends to unity, love, forgiveness, to service."

In 1872 Colonel Thomas L. Kane, the great friend of our people in the days of their distress in Iowa and at the time of the coming of the army to the Salt Lake Valley, came west again with his wife and two sons. They traveled to St. George with Brigham Young, stopping each night in the homes of Church members along the way. Mrs. Kane wrote a series of letters to her father back in Philadelphia. In one of these she said:

"At every one of the places we stayed on this journey we had prayers immediately after the dinner-supper, and prayers again before breakfast. No one was excused. . . . The Mormons . . . kneel at once, while the head of the household, or an honored guest prays aloud. . . . They spend very little time in ascriptions, but ask for what they need, and thank Him for what He has given. . . . [They] take it for granted that God knows our familiar names and titles, and will ask a blessing on [a particular individual by name], . . . I liked this when I became used to it."

Oh, that we as a people might fully cultivate this practice, which was of such importance to our pioneer forebears. Family prayer was as much a part of their worship as were the meetings convened in the Tabernacle. With the faith that came of those daily invocations, they grubbed the sagebrush, led the waters to the parched soil, made the desert blossom, governed their families in love, lived in peace one with another, and made their names immortal as they lost themselves in the service of God.

The family is the basic unit of society. The praying family is the hope of a better society. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found" (Isaiah 55:6).

Can we make our homes more beautiful? Yes, through addressing ourselves as families to the Source of all true beauty. Can we strengthen society and make it a better place in which to live? Yes, by strengthening the virtue of our family life through kneeling together and supplicating the Almighty in the name of His Beloved Son.

This practice, a return to family worship, spreading across the land and over the earth, would in a generation largely lift the blight that is destroying us. It would restore integrity, mutual respect, and a spirit of thankfulness in the hearts of people.

The Master declared, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7).

I give you my testimony that if you sincerely apply family prayer, you will not go away unrewarded. The changes may not be readily apparent. They may be extremely subtle. But they will be real, for God “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

May we be faithful in setting an example before the world in this practice and in encouraging others to do likewise.

From the February 1991 *Ensign*, pages 2–5.

“THEREFORE I WAS TAUGHT”

Elder L. Tom Perry
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Goodly Parents

The Book of Mormon begins with these words: “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father” (1 Nephi 1:1). What a different world this would be if the personal journals of each of our Father in Heaven’s children could begin with a similar phrase—having goodly parents and being taught by them.

We live in such a special time in history, a time when the Lord’s gospel has been restored in its fullness. Our missionary force is increasing in quality and quantity; thus, the gospel is being taught in more languages to more nations and to greater numbers of listening ears than ever before. As wards and stakes are being established in most parts of the world, creative minds have been inspired to develop communication instruments which are capable of bringing the instructions of the prophets to the ears of many, many more people. The good news of the gospel can now spread more rapidly to bring the hope of everlasting peace to the hearts of mankind.

Family Life in Crisis

One of the great messages of the gospel is the doctrine of the eternal nature of the family unit. We declare to the world the value and importance of family life, but much of the confusion and difficulty we find existing in the world today is being traced to the deterioration of the family. Home experiences where children are taught and trained by loving parents are diminishing.

Family life where children and parents communicate together in study, play, and work has been replaced by a quick, individual, microwaved dinner and an evening in front of the TV set. In 1991 the National Association of Counties, meeting in Salt Lake City, thought that the lack of home influence had reached such a point of becoming a crisis in our nation and spent time in their meetings

discussing their concerns. They identified five basic concepts that could increase every family’s chances for success.

First, strengthen relationships through family activities; second, establish reasonable rules and expectations; third, build self-esteem; fourth, set achievable goals; and fifth, periodically evaluate family strengths and needs.

Suddenly the urgent and warning voice of our prophets from the very beginning of time has special relevance. As we have been counseled and encouraged, we must be attentive to our own families and accelerate our missionary effort to bring others to a knowledge of the truth and the importance of the family unit.

Adam and Eve Learn Parental Duties

In the very beginning, the Lord’s instructions to Adam and Eve made clear their responsibilities as parents. Their roles were well defined. After they had received instructions from the Lord, we find them following His counsel and saying this:

“And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

“And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

“And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters” (Moses 5:10–12).

Teach and Train Children

Yes, from the very beginning the responsibility of parents teaching their children was among the instructions the Lord gave to our first earthly parents.

Revelations received as the Church has been restored in this day again admonish parents in their obligation to teach and train their children. In the ninety-third section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we find the Lord chastising some of the brethren for not paying attention to their family responsibilities. The scriptures read:

“But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth. . . .

“You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

“And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house” (D&C 93:40, 42–43).

Importance of Family Home Evening

Years ago the Church admonished all parents to hold weekly family home evenings. Today that admonition has been institutionalized in the homes of Church members. Monday night has been set aside as an evening for families to be together. No Church activities or social appointments should be sponsored on this night. We have been promised great blessings if our families would be faithful in this regard.

President Harold B. Lee once counseled us:

“Now keep in mind this; that when the full measure of Elijah’s mission is understood, that the hearts of the children will be turned to the fathers, and the fathers to the children. It applies just as much on this side of the veil as it does on the other side of the veil. If we neglect our families here in having family home night and we fail in our responsibility here, how would heaven look if we lost some of those through our own neglect? Heaven would not be heaven until we have done everything we can to save those whom the Lord has sent through our lineage.”

Then he continued:

“So, the hearts of you fathers and mothers must be turned to your children *right now*, if you have the true spirit of Elijah, and not think that it applies merely to those who are beyond the veil. Let your hearts be turned to your children, and teach your children; but you must do it when they are young enough to be properly schooled. And if you are neglecting your family home evening, you are neglecting the beginning of the mission of Elijah just as certainly as if you were neglecting your research work of genealogy” (in *Relief Society Courses of Study, 1977–78* [1977], 2; italics added).

I’ve often thought of the happy times we had when our family was young and our children were at home. I have made a mental review of those days and considered the changes I would make in our family organization and administration if we had the opportunity to live that period over again. There are two areas I would determine to improve if that privilege were granted to me to have young children in our home once again.

The first would be to spend more time as husband and wife in a family executive committee meeting learning, communicating, planning, and organizing to better fulfill our roles as parents.

The second wish I would like, if I could have those years over, would be to spend more family time. This includes more consistent, meaningful family home evenings.

Youth Contribute to Success

The full burden of planning and preparing for family home evenings should not be left to parents alone. The most successful ones I have witnessed are when the youth of the family take an active part.

I call on you great deacons, teachers, and priests, you Beehive girls, Mia Maids, and Laurels to make a major contribution in the success of your family home evenings. In many homes you can be the conscience of the family. After all, you have the most to gain from this experience. If you want to live in a world of peace, security, and opportunity, the family you contribute to can add to the well-being, yes, even of the whole world.

I remember an example of this that occurred over the Christmas holidays one year when we had the grandchildren on an outing with us. In order to have a real togetherness experience, we had arranged for a van to travel together. In the van were Grandpa and Grandma and my son and his three older children. My son’s wife had stayed at home with the younger members of the family. I was taking my turn at the wheel, and my wife was seated next to me acting as our navigator. From the back end of the van, I heard Audrey, the eldest child, counseling with her father. She was saying, “Dad, one of our goals this year was to finish the Book of Mormon in our family study. This is the last day of the year. Why don’t we complete it now so that we will be on schedule?”

What a special experience it was to listen to my son and his three children, each taking turns reading aloud the final chapters of Moroni and completing their goal of reading the entire Book of Mormon. Remember, it was a young woman who made this suggestion, not one of the parents.

Challenge to Youth

You are a chosen generation—saved for this special time in the history of mankind. You have so much to give to add to the growth and development of the families to which you belong. I challenge you to step forward in your family units with that special, enthusiastic spirit of your youth to make the gospel really live in your homes. Remember the counsel of President Joseph F. Smith when he said:

“I would like my children, and all the children in Zion, to know that there is nothing in this world that is of so much value to them as the knowledge of the Gospel as it has been restored to the earth in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. There is nothing that can compensate for its loss. There is nothing on earth that can compare with the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let, therefore, all the parents in Zion look after their children, and teach them the principles of the Gospel, and strive as far as possible to get them to do their duty—not mechanically, because they are urged to do it, but try to instill into the hearts of the children the spirit of truth and an abiding love for the Gospel, that they may not only do their duty because it is pleasing to their parents, but because it is pleasing also to themselves” (in Brian H. Stuy, comp., *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, 5 vols. [1987–92], 5:436).

Revitalize Family Home Evening

Family home evenings are for everyone, whether it be in a two-parent home, a single-parent home, or in a single-member family unit. Home teachers, we call upon you in your regular visits to encourage and revitalize the holding of family home evenings.

Our present prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, has reminded us again of the necessity of holding family home evenings and the ingredients which constitute a successful one. He has said:

“Designed to strengthen and safeguard the family, the Church’s [family] home evening program establishes one night each week that is to be set apart for fathers and mothers to gather their sons and daughters around them in the home. Prayer is offered, hymns and other songs are sung, scriptures are read, family topics are discussed, talent is displayed, principles of the gospel are taught, and often games are played and homemade refreshments served” (in Conference Report, Philippine Islands Area Conference 1975, 10).

It is our hope that each of you might write down each of those suggestions made by the prophet on what a family home evening should contain.

Then he continues: “Now, here are the blessings promised by a prophet of God for those who will hold weekly [family] home evenings: ‘If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them’ ” (in Conference Report, Philippine Islands Area Conference 1975, 10; see also *Improvement Era*, June 1915, 734).

We encourage each of you to follow the counsel of our prophet. In all the family units throughout the Church, evaluate again the progress you are making in holding regular family home evenings. The application of this program will be a shield and a protection to you against the evils of our time and will bring you, individually and collectively, greater and abundant joy now and in the eternities hereafter.

May God bless us that we may revitalize and strengthen this tremendously important program as we counsel together as family members.

From an address by Elder Perry in the April 1994 general conference of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 47–51; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 36–38).