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## Our Father's Plan Is about Families

*"We without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect" (D&C 128:18).*

**T**hank you all for joining us today. We are thrilled to be with you. The inspiring growth of family history work worldwide is because of you and people like you.

I am deeply grateful that we are an everlasting family, and we want to share some experiences with you about our quest to build an eternal family.

Never forget that family history—and the temple ordinances enabled by it—are an essential part of the work of salvation. Participating in this sacred work for the dead blesses the lives of the living. It strengthens our faith and commitment to the gospel, helps us resist temptation, draws families closer together, and strengthens our wards and stakes.

Let me emphasize with you one last time the "Find, Take, Teach"



process. I hope you've heard it enough at this conference that any of you could summarize it, but let me give it a try. By *find*, we mean to

use the FamilySearch.org website or the booklet *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together* to find the name of one or more of our ancestors or their descendants. Then *take* these names to the temple, or share them with others so they can take them. (When possible, go to the temple as a family.) Finally, *teach* our families this process, and then teach others to do the same.

Our Father's plan is about families, symbolized by a great tree. In order for a tree to live and grow, it needs both roots and branches. We likewise need to be connected both to our roots—our parents, grandparents, and other ancestors—and to our branches—our children, grandchildren, and other descendants. Several poignant scriptures use the analogy of a tree with roots and branches representing the family.

The prophet Malachi, in the last book of the Old Testament, prophesied of a time when Elijah the prophet would return to the earth before the "great and dreadful day of the Lord . . . [to] turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest [He] come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6).



When the angel Moroni appeared to 17-year-old Joseph Smith in 1823, he quoted these same verses from Malachi but rendered them differently. Moroni said on that September night, "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. . . . And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39). Four times the angel Moroni repeated Malachi's words to the boy Joseph.

Imagine if all we knew about this great prophet Elijah was what Joseph Smith knew from the Bible. From that book of scripture, we know that Elijah lived during a troubled time, some 900 years before Christ's birth. The evil duo Ahab and Jezebel reigned in wickedness over Israel as king and queen, inducing subjects to worship the false god Baal and murdering the Lord's prophets, among others.

Elijah was a remarkable prophet. Christians and Jews the world over accept the Old Testament account of Elijah.

The scriptures record how Elijah's life was miraculously

preserved and how he saved a widow from famine and raised her son from the dead (see 1 Kings 17).

He describes how the “still small voice” of the Lord reassured him that he was not alone in his devotion to Jehovah (see 1 Kings 19:12–18).

Finally, he was translated and carried into heaven without tasting death (see 2 Kings 2:5–11).

Only through modern revelation is Elijah’s complete role revealed. He was the last prophet to hold the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood before the time of Jesus Christ. With Moses, he appeared to Jesus Christ and Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration in the meridian of time. As a seminal element of the Restoration, Elijah again appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in 1836 in the Kirtland Temple. He restored the keys of the sealing power once again for the sealing of families in this dispensation in fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy (see D&C 110:13–16). Because Elijah was sent in this dispensation, the fullness of salvation is available to both the living and the dead.

Elijah’s mission is facilitated by what is sometimes called the spirit of Elijah, which, as Elder Russell M. Nelson has taught, is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family” (“A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34). That is why we often call the manifestations of the Holy Ghost associated with family history and temple work the spirit of Elijah.

We read in Doctrine and Covenants 128:18 of those who have passed on before us, that “we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect.” What does this mean? We find this answer in scripture:

“And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. *For their salvation is necessary and*



*essential to our salvation*, as Paul says concerning the fathers—that they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (D&C 128:15; emphasis added).

“Their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation.” This means that the salvation of the whole human family is interdependent and interconnected—like the roots and branches of a great tree.

Shortly before his death in 1918, President Joseph F. Smith had a remarkable vision that later became section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In that vision, we read that while His body lay in the tomb, Christ visited the world of spirits and taught the valiant there. “Among the great and mighty ones,” President Smith recorded, “who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous were Father Adam, the Ancient of Days and father of all, and our glorious Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God” (D&C 138:38–39).

I have thought a lot about these verses. It seems to me that so much of family history work and the blessings that come to families as a result of this great work are done by and because of the faithful daughters of Eve. Without Eve and her daughters, there would be no family history because there would be no family. Without the righteous influence of women, families would

disintegrate, and social chaos would prevail.

Family commitments and expectations should be at the top of our list of priorities. They will protect our divine destiny. To get started, I have challenged families to hold what I’ve called a “Family Tree Gathering.” This should be a recurring event. Everyone could bring to these gatherings existing family histories, stories, and photos, including cherished possessions of grandparents and parents. The booklet *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together* can be used to help record family information, stories, and photos that can then be uploaded to Family Tree on FamilySearch.org.

However, this cannot be only a one-time effort. It requires a lifetime of diligence. For those who are looking for more fruitful ways to observe the Sabbath day as a family, the hastening of this sacred work is fertile ground.

The center of family history is the home. Our young people are excited to learn about the lives of family members—where they came from and how they lived. We need to help them develop a love for this work.

Many of our youth have already had their hearts turned to their fathers. They become so excited about the work that they lose track of time and are disappointed when they have to stop.

Young people love stories and photos, and they now have easy



access to the technological expertise to preserve those memories in Family Tree on FamilySearch.org.

They can find family members that need temple ordinances through a newly released record hinting tool on FamilySearch.org. These record hints about family members are powered by the indexing efforts of Church members worldwide. These records—and there are millions of them—will help you find more ancestors who may not yet be connected to your family and who need ordinances performed for them in temples.

There are more records from around the world with hinting technology on websites such as Ancestry.com, findmypast.com, and MyHeritage.com, which all Church members can now access for free.

Although, as I mentioned, the center of family history is the home, the Church will continue to provide family history centers, where families can discover their ancestors together and access the Internet if it isn't readily available at home.

All worthy members of the Church ages 12 and up can obtain a limited-use temple recommend to perform baptisms for the dead after an interview with one or two ecclesiastical leaders. This includes all our new converts.

Carrying with you a signed recommend that you can present at any temple is a joy. It also carries with it sacred protections. As the president of my quorum, President

Boyd K. Packer, has said:

“No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the family history research that supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness. Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a people” (“The Holy Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 35).

Family history is a family affair, but not everyone has the same situation. Many of our ancestors died without being married or having children. Some were divorced; some married several times. Many had children who were disabled or who died young. Everyone has a story.

Every soul, living or dead, who is accountable for his or her actions, needs the blessing of these sacred ordinances, and we can help our family members receive them. Remember the influence of our glorious Mother Eve and her faithful daughters (see D&C 138:39).

As with our deceased ancestors, we cannot be made perfect without the daughters of Eve or without their influence.

My wife, Mary, and family are so important to me that I am not sure that there would be joy in an eternal life without them.

Regardless of whether you are single, whether your spouse is less active, or whether you yourself are less active or even a member of

this Church, you too can assist in the salvation of souls. There can be no more important, fulfilling, or glorious work.

The head of this work is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. After His death, He opened the door to the prison that held the dead captive:

“He organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men. . . . And the chosen messengers went forth to declare the acceptable day of the Lord and proclaim liberty to the captives who were bound, even unto all who would repent of their sins and receive the gospel” (D&C 138:30–31).

Our message to you this afternoon has been simple, but it is profound. It does not require soaring rhetoric or complex doctrine. It is about having a broken heart and a contrite spirit and a commitment to follow our Savior.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I leave my blessing upon you, with a promise that if you look beyond the bonds of time and mortality and help those who cannot help themselves, you will be blessed with more closeness and joy in your family and with the divine protections afforded those who are faithful in His service.

Elijah's promise makes it clear that each of us has an obligation to the generations that precede us and the generations that follow us. I invoke a special blessing on you parents, you youth, and you children that each of you will find joy and be blessed in every other aspect of your life as you fulfill the obligation that has been sent from heaven.

I leave these words and this blessing with you in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
 OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS