

FAMILY

G U I D E B O O K

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“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”

In 1995, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” This proclamation is a declaration and reaffirmation of doctrines and practices that prophets have stated repeatedly throughout the history of the Church. It contains principles that are vital to the happiness and well-being of every family. Family members should study the proclamation and should live by its precepts.

“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” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Organization and Purpose of the Family



Organization

The family is sacred in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is the most important social unit in time and eternity. God has established families to bring happiness to His children, allow them to learn



correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and prepare them for eternal life.

The home is the best place to teach, learn, and apply gospel principles. It is where individuals learn to provide the food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities they need. The father and mother, as equal partners, should help each family member:

- Seek the truth and develop faith in God.
- Repent of sins, be baptized for the remission of sins, become a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and receive the Holy Ghost.

- Obey the commandments of God, study the scriptures diligently, offer personal prayers daily, and serve others.
- Share the gospel with others.
- Be endowed and be married in the temple to a worthy companion for eternity, create a happy home for the family, and support the family by love and sacrifice.



- Search for information about deceased ancestors and perform temple ordinances for them.



- Provide the nourishment required for spiritual, social, physical, and emotional health.

The father presides over the family and is responsible to teach the children and provide the necessities of

life for the family. A worthy and eligible father in the Church has the opportunity to hold the priesthood, which is the power and authority to act in the name of God. With this power and authority, the father becomes the priesthood leader of his family. He leads his family in preparing to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. His wife is his most important companion, partner, and counselor. Husband and wife should counsel together on all matters that affect the family and home.

The father should provide for the spiritual needs of his family. He should see that they are taught the gospel of Jesus Christ and should do all he can to encourage them and help them obey the Lord's commandments.

A father who holds the priesthood can bless his family members and provide for their spiritual needs. By the authority of the appropriate priesthood and *with authorization from his priesthood leader*, the father can:

1. Name and bless children.
2. Baptize children (and others).
3. Confirm children (and others) members of the Church and confer upon them the Holy Ghost.
4. Confer the priesthood upon his sons (and others) and ordain them to offices in the priesthood.
5. Bless and pass the sacrament.
6. Dedicate graves.

Without authorization from his priesthood leader, a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood can consecrate oil and bless members of his family and others when they are ill and give them special blessings at other times when the need arises. (See pages 18–25 in this guidebook for instructions on performing priesthood ordinances and blessings.)

The father is to see that his family is actively involved in three basic responsibilities:

1. Personal and family spiritual and temporal preparedness.
2. Sharing the gospel.
3. Family history and temple ordinances for the living and the dead.

The mother is an equal partner and counselor to her husband. She helps him teach their children the laws of God. If there is no father in the home, the mother presides over the family.

The father and mother must be one in purpose. Their goal should be to prepare all members of the family to return to our Heavenly Father. They should be united as they work toward this goal. The Lord has established the Church to help fathers and mothers teach and take care of their families.

When children come into the family, parents are to love them, teach them the truths of the gospel, and be examples of righteous living. Children are to learn and keep the commandments

of God. They are to honor and obey their parents.

The strength of the Church depends on families and individuals who live the gospel of Jesus Christ. The extent to which a family enjoys the blessings of the gospel depends largely on how well the father and the mother understand and perform their basic duties as parents. The Church never intends to give programs or responsibilities to fathers and mothers that will overwhelm or discourage them or cause them to neglect these most basic duties.

Purpose

Because our Heavenly Father loves us, He wants us to become exalted as He is. To help us, He has given us a plan to follow based on divine laws of truth. Those who learn about the plan and follow it faithfully can someday become like our Father in Heaven and enjoy the kind of life He lives.

Part of the plan was for us to leave heaven and come to earth. Here we gain a physical body, learn through experiences, and prove ourselves worthy to live again in the presence of God. We prove ourselves worthy by freely choosing to keep His laws. (See Abraham 3:23–25; 2 Nephi 2:27.)

To help us prepare ourselves for life with Him, our Heavenly Father has organized us into families. Through sacred ordinances and covenants, our families can be united eternally.

Teaching the Gospel in the Home



Teaching Children with Kindness and Love

The Lord has commanded parents to teach the gospel to their children. He said:

“Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, 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.

“For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized.

“And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands.

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

Parents should teach with kindness and love, remembering the Apostle Paul’s counsel to “bring [their children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

Family Scripture Study

We can become like our Heavenly Father and enjoy the kind of life He lives only by keeping the laws upon which that blessing is based (see D&C 130:20–21). Before we can live

by those laws, we must know what they are. "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" (D&C 131:6).

Jesus Christ is our leader and law-giver. He knows the way and the laws we must keep, and He has invited each of us to follow Him. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). To become like our Heavenly Father and return to Him, we must learn the teachings of Jesus and follow them. We have the scriptures to help us learn about the life, teachings, and commandments of Jesus Christ.

The four books that the Church accepts as scripture are the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. They explain the laws of the gospel and the standards by which we can measure all thoughts, actions, and teachings. They help us learn about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and give examples of people who had faith in God and kept His commandments.

Jesus has taught us to search and study the scriptures (see John 5:39; 3 Nephi 23:1; D&C 88:118).

Families should study the scriptures together regularly to learn and follow the teachings of the Lord. Parents should gather their families together at a regular time each day to read and discuss the scriptures. Each family member who can read should

have an opportunity to read from the scriptures.



A family member may offer a prayer before the scripture reading and ask Heavenly Father to bless each one to understand what is read and to gain a testimony of it. Families may want to have their family prayer following the scripture reading.

As families read and ponder the scriptures, they will want to become more like the Savior and will find greater happiness and peace in their lives.

Individual and Family Prayers

Each of us must learn to talk to our Father in Heaven through prayer. He loves us and wants us to talk to Him. He wants us to thank Him for our blessings and ask for His help and guidance. He will help us when we ask. Most prayers are offered with our heads bowed and our eyes closed while we kneel, sit, or stand.

We need to remember four important principles when we pray:

1. We begin our prayers by speaking to our Father in Heaven: "Our Father in Heaven . . ."
2. We thank our Father in Heaven for the things He gives us: "We thank Thee . . ."
3. We ask Him for the help we need: "We ask Thee . . ."
4. We close our prayer in the name of the Savior: "In the name of Jesus Christ, amen."

Our prayers do not always have to follow all four of these steps, but having them in mind will help us learn to pray. We should always begin and end our prayers with the first and last steps but what we say in the middle will depend on what we feel is important. Sometimes we will want to spend most of our prayer thanking our Heavenly Father. At other times we may want to spend most of our prayer asking for His help.



Individual Prayers

Each person should pray individually at least once each morning and evening. Parents should teach children to offer their personal prayers as soon as they begin to talk. Parents can teach children how to pray by kneeling with them and having them repeat one sentence at a time. Soon children will be able to offer their own prayers.

Family Prayers

Every family should have daily family prayer. The whole family kneels together, and the head of the family offers the prayer or asks a family member to offer it. Everyone should have a regular opportunity to offer the prayer. Small children can take their turns with their parents helping them. Family prayer time is an excellent occasion for teaching children how to pray and for teaching such principles as faith in God, humility, and love.



Special Prayers

Parents should teach their children that God is always ready to hear their prayers. In addition to their regular individual and family prayers, they can pray at any time they need special help or want to express thanks.

Blessing the Food

Parents should see that family members learn to thank God for their food and ask Him to bless it before they eat. Each person, including young children, should take a turn offering the blessing. Offering a prayer for a blessing on the food helps parents and children learn to be thankful to our Heavenly Father.



Family Home Evening

Family home evening is for everyone, including recently married couples, fathers and mothers with children, single parents with children, parents who have no children at home, single adults in home evening groups, and those who live alone or with roommates. Everyone, regardless of their circumstances, will be blessed by holding family home evenings.

The Church keeps Monday evenings free of other activities so families can be together for family home evening.



The First Presidency said: “We promise you great blessings if you will follow the Lord’s counsel and hold regular family home evenings. We pray constantly that parents in the Church will accept their responsibility to teach and exemplify gospel principles to their children. May God bless you to be diligent in this most important responsibility” (“Message from the First Presidency,” *Family Home Evening Resource Book* [1983], iv).

As patriarch of his family, the father presides at family home evening. In the absence of a father, the mother presides. Parents conduct or appoint a family member to conduct the home evening. They teach the lesson or delegate the teaching to children who are old enough to teach. Everyone who is old enough should have opportunities to participate. Younger children can help in such ways as leading music, quoting scriptures, answering questions, holding pictures, passing out refreshments, and praying.

A suggested outline for family home evening follows:

- Opening song (by the family)
- Opening prayer (by a family member)
- Poem or scripture reading (by a family member)
- Lesson (by the father, mother, or an older child)
- Activity (led by a family member and with all family members participating)
- Closing song (by the family)
- Closing prayer (by a family member)
- Refreshments

A family can hold home evening in many other ways. Any activity that brings the family together, strengthens their love for each other, helps them draw closer to Heavenly Father, and encourages them to live righteously can be a family home evening. Examples of such activities include reading the scriptures, discussing the gospel, sharing testimonies, doing a service project, singing together, going on a picnic, playing a family game, and hiking. All family home evenings should include prayer.

Family home evening lessons can be based on the scriptures; words of latter-day prophets, particularly general conference addresses; and personal experiences and testimonies. Many lessons should be centered on

the birth, life, teachings, and Atonement of the Savior. *Gospel Principles*, *Gospel Fundamentals*, *True to the Faith*, *For the Strength of Youth*, and Church magazines contain articles and other information on many subjects that could be part of family home evening lessons.

Suggested discussion topics for home evening follow:

- The plan of salvation
- The life and teachings of Jesus
- Repentance
- Prayer
- Fasting
- The Word of Wisdom
- The Lord's standard of morality
- The meaning of the sacrament
- Tithing
- Gratitude
- Honesty
- Reverence for God and respect for His creations
- Preparing for baptism, priesthood ordination, or marriage
- Preparing to enter the temple
- Reading the scriptures
- Keeping the Sabbath day holy
- Forgiving others
- Gaining and sharing a testimony
- Sharing the gospel with others

- Compiling family histories
- Understanding and accepting death
- Solving family problems
- Managing family finances
- Sharing family household work
- Appreciating and enjoying music

Holidays and Special Occasions

Holidays and special occasions, such as Christmas; Easter; the anniversary of the restoration of the priesthood; conferences; departure of a family member for a mission; or the birth, baptism, or ordination of a family member, can be excellent opportunities to teach the truths of the gospel.

Tithing and Offerings



The Lord has commanded His people to live the law of tithing and be worthy of the promised blessings (see Malachi 3:8–11).

An excellent time for parents to teach the law of tithing and offerings is

when they pay their own. Children are influenced by what they see their parents do. Children who receive an allowance should pay tithing on it. Each child could have three different containers for money: one for tithing, one for a mission, and one for spending money. Each time children receive money, they should learn to put 10 percent into the tithing bank first, then some amount into the mission bank, and the balance into the spending-money bank.

When children pay tithing, parents should teach them to fill out a tithing slip, put it into an envelope with the money, and give or send the envelope to a member of their bishopric or branch presidency. Families living in an isolated area should give tithing to their designated priesthood leader.

Mealtime Discussions

Mealtimes can be good occasions for talking about the gospel. Small children like to ask and answer gospel questions. When they do not know the answers, the father or mother can give brief answers and teach the gospel. Not every mealtime needs to include a gospel discussion, but such a discussion two or three times a week can help the family learn the gospel.

Bedtime Stories

Because most children love bedtime stories, they provide an excellent opportunity for teaching the gospel by telling or reading stories from the

scriptures, Church publications, or personal experiences. Stories about honesty, sharing, and kindness teach important gospel principles.

Working Together



Many opportunities for teaching the gospel arise as families work together around the home. While cleaning the house or working in the yard or garden, for example, parents should be alert for opportunities to talk about the gospel. A child will often ask questions. Parents should always take time to give simple answers. Comments like “You are a good worker. I’m sure Heavenly Father is proud of you” or “Look at the beautiful clouds Heavenly Father has made” can give children a feeling of gratitude to our Heavenly Father and an assurance that He is real.

Family Councils

Parents may call family members together in a family council. Families can use these councils to set family goals, resolve family problems, discuss finances, make plans, support

and strengthen each other, bear testimony, and pray for each other. A council may be held whenever needed. Parents may want to hold a family council each Sunday or in connection with family home evening. Respect for the opinions and feelings of others is essential to the success of family councils.



Private Interviews

Many parents find that regular, private interviews with each child help them draw close to their children, encourage them, and teach them the gospel. Such interviews may be formal or informal and may be held often.



The parent should express love for and confidence in the child, and the child should have an opportunity to express his or her feelings about any subject, problem, or experience. The parent should listen carefully and should take the child's problems and confidences seriously. The parent and child may want to pray together. Problems arising from the interview that involve other family members could be handled in the next family home evening.

Family Activities

Parents should often plan times to have the entire family do things together. Picnics, camping, family projects, home and yard work, swimming, hiking, and wholesome movies and other entertainment are a few of the many activities that families can enjoy together.

A family that enjoys activities together will feel greater love and harmony. Children will be more willing to listen to their parents and follow their advice when they feel close to them. Parents will be able to teach the gospel more effectively.



Fulfilling Family Responsibilities



The mission of the Lord's Church is to help all people come unto Christ. Families can help accomplish this mission as they:

1. Provide for their own spiritual and physical needs and help meet the needs of others.
2. Share the gospel with others.
3. See that family members receive temple ordinances and help provide these blessings for their ancestors who have died.

Spiritual and Physical Needs

Spiritual Needs

The previous section of this guidebook, "Teaching the Gospel in the

Home," contains information on how families can provide for their spiritual needs.

Physical Needs

Families are to become self-reliant so they can provide for their own physical needs and help others. To become self-reliant, family members must be willing to work. Work is physical, mental, or spiritual effort. It is a source of accomplishment, happiness, self-esteem, and prosperity. Parents should strive to be self-reliant and should teach their children likewise. Being self-reliant will enable them to help those in need.

Fathers are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for

their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. Parents see that the family has a clean home, wholesome food, clothing, medical and dental care, educational opportunities, instruction in managing financial resources, and, if possible, training in how to grow some of their own food. Parents should teach their children how to prepare their food and how to preserve it for later use.

Parents should be willing to work hard to provide for these physical needs. "And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked" (Mosiah 4:14). Parents should plan and prepare to provide for family needs in times of illness, disaster, unemployment, or other difficulties. If the father has trouble providing for the physical needs of his family and if other family members are unable to help, he may seek assistance through priesthood leaders.

Children can help provide for the physical needs of their families by helping their parents with their work, studying well in school, taking care of their clothing and other possessions, keeping themselves and their home clean and neat, and maintaining good health.

Family members should improve their ability to read, write, and do basic arithmetic and should take advantage of every opportunity to obtain knowledge and improve skills. They should

obey the Word of Wisdom and eat healthful foods. Where possible, families should store a year's supply, or as much as possible, of the basic items needed to sustain life. Family members should avoid unnecessary debt, save for the future, meet all of their obligations, and use their resources wisely, avoiding waste.

Parents should teach their children to share with others. Nearly everyone can give something, no matter how little they have. One way to help those in need is by fasting each month and contributing fast offerings, which are used to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, and relieve the afflicted. We show our love for the Lord when we help others. He said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

Sharing the Gospel

The Lord, through His latter-day prophets, has taught that every



member of the Church has the responsibility to share the gospel with others. "It becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor" (D&C 88:81). Alma, a prophet in the Book of Mormon, explained that when we are baptized we should be willing "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9).

Family members should do all they can to help their relatives, friends, and neighbors learn about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the blessings it can bring into their lives. By sharing the gospel, parents and children can strengthen their own testimonies and bring the blessings of the gospel to others. Families can:

- Be good examples by obeying all the commandments (see Matthew 5:16).
- Be grateful for their membership in the Church (see Romans 1:16) and let other people know they are members.
- Ask acquaintances if they would like to know more about the Church.
- Ask the Lord to help them select a family or individual who is ready to hear the gospel.
- Introduce the family or individual to the Church in some way, such as by inviting them to a family home evening or to a Church meeting or activity, giving them Church books or pamphlets to read, or talking

with them about the blessings of the gospel.

- Invite the family or individual into their home to be taught by the missionaries.

Parents have the responsibility to prepare themselves and their children to serve full-time missions. To prepare children, especially sons, parents should teach the gospel in the home, have personal and family scripture study and prayers, and talk often about the responsibilities and blessings of sharing the gospel. They can teach their children to save money for missions, work hard, be self-reliant, and love and serve other people.

Temple Ordinances for the Living and the Dead



In temples, worthy Church members receive sacred ordinances and enter into covenants with God. They also participate in ordinance work for their deceased ancestors. Where possible, the father and mother should each

obtain a temple recommend from their priesthood leaders and go to a temple to receive their own temple ordinances. If they are unable to go to a temple, they should live worthily of a temple recommend.

Families have the sacred responsibility to ensure that temple ordinances are performed for their ancestors who have died without receiving them. Church members who have received their own ordinances should return to the temple as often as time, means, and temple availability permit to perform ordinances for their ancestors.

Fathers and mothers should gather written records of important events in their lives and in the lives of their

children, including certificates of blessings, baptisms, ordinations, marriages, and deaths; important letters; photographs; news clippings; and similar items. They should compile their own personal histories and should encourage each family member to keep a personal history. They should help younger children begin their own personal histories.

Families should gather information about their ancestors and compile it into family histories. They should begin by compiling information on their most recent four generations.

Leadership Training



Under the direction of stake, mission, or district leaders, priesthood and auxiliary leaders are to teach parents to understand and perform the three basic family responsibilities (see pages 12–15). Leaders should teach fathers and mothers how to lead their families. If a family lives in an isolated area, the stake, mission, or district leaders are to see that parents learn and fulfill their responsibilities.

Holding Worship Services at Home (For Families in Isolated Areas)



Some families live in isolated areas and cannot regularly attend ward or branch meetings. *With authorization from the stake, mission, or district president*, such families should hold Sunday worship services in their home. In areas that do not have established Church units, families need the authorization of the Area President.

The father or another priesthood holder may prepare and bless the sacrament if he is worthy, is a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood or holds the Melchizedek Priesthood, *and has permission from his priesthood leaders*. Any priesthood holder may pass the sacrament. Instructions for administering the sacrament are on pages 21–23 of this guidebook.

A Sunday worship service should be simple, reverent, and dignified. It may consist of:

1. Opening hymn
2. Opening prayer
3. Blessing and passing of the sacrament
4. One or more of the following items:
 - One or two short talks or testimonies
 - Scripture reading and discussion as a family
 - A lesson by a family member
5. Closing hymn
6. Closing prayer

In planning a Sunday worship service, parents should seek and follow the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord. People of the Book of Mormon gave an example of this kind of service: "And their meetings were conducted . . . after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done" (Moroni 6:9).

The family should use the scriptures as their basic guide. In addition, they may use general conference addresses, *Gospel Fundamentals*, *Gospel Principles*, *True to the Faith*, *For the Strength of Youth*, missionary pamphlets, Church magazines, and other Church publications and audiovisual items.

If no one in the family holds the appropriate priesthood, the father

or mother may gather family members together to sing hymns, study the scriptures, pray, and draw closer together and to Heavenly Father. The family's designated priesthood leader is to arrange periodic opportunities for the family to receive the sacrament.

Parents should have weekday activities, such as hikes, picnics, wholesome movies, visiting relatives, sports, musical programs, and swimming.

The family should give tithing, fast offerings, and other contributions to their designated priesthood leader.

The family submits no written reports to the Church, but their designated priesthood leader interviews the father regularly, asking him to report on the family. Where necessary, leaders may conduct these interviews by telephone.

Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings



Priesthood ordinances are sacred acts given by the Lord and performed by the authority of the priesthood. Priesthood blessings are given by the authority of the priesthood for healing, comfort, and encouragement. Brethren who perform ordinances and blessings should prepare themselves by living according to gospel principles and striving to be guided by the Holy Spirit. They should perform each ordinance and blessing in a dignified manner and comply with the following requirements; the ordinance should be:

1. Performed in the name of Jesus Christ.
2. Performed by the authority of the priesthood.

3. Performed with any necessary procedures, such as using specified words or using consecrated oil.
4. Authorized by the designated priesthood leader who holds the proper keys, if necessary.

Ordinances that require priesthood leader authorization are naming and blessing children, performing baptisms and confirmations, conferring the priesthood and ordaining to a priesthood office, blessing and passing the sacrament, and dedicating graves.

When several brethren participate in an ordinance or blessing, each one places his left hand lightly on the shoulder of the brother to his left. The practice of inviting large numbers of

priesthood holders to assist is discouraged.

The ordinances and blessings explained in this section will help fathers serve as patriarchs in their families.

Naming and Blessing Children



“Every member of the church of Christ having children is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name” (D&C 20:70). In conformity with this revelation, only worthy men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood may participate in naming and blessing children. *The ordinance of naming and blessing children requires authorization from the presiding authority.*

When blessing a baby, men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood gather in a circle and hold the baby in their hands. When blessing an older child,

brethren place their hands lightly on the child’s head. The person who gives the blessing:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father.
2. States that the blessing is given by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives the child a name.
4. Gives a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.



Baptism

Under the direction of the presiding authority, a worthy priest or man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may perform a baptism. To do so, he:

1. Stands in the water with the person who will be baptized.
2. For convenience and safety, holds the person’s right wrist with his left hand; the person being baptized holds the left wrist of the one performing the baptism with his or her left hand.

3. Raises his right arm to the square.
4. States the person's full name and says, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" (D&C 20:73).
5. Has the person hold his or her nose with the right hand for convenience; the one performing the baptism places his right hand high on the person's back and immerses the person completely, including the person's clothing.
6. Helps the person come up out of the water.

Two priests or men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood witness each baptism to be sure it is performed properly. The baptism must be repeated if the words are not spoken exactly as given in Doctrine and Covenants 20:73 or if part of the person's body or clothing was not immersed completely. The person being baptized and the person performing the ordinance are to wear white clothing that is not transparent when wet.

Confirmation

Converts who are age nine or older and those who are eight whose parents are both nonmembers are confirmed in a sacrament meeting (see D&C 20:41). Eight-year-old children may be confirmed immediately after the baptism at the baptism location if at least one parent is a member of

the Church and both parents give permission for the baptism and confirmation. *Under the direction of the bishop or branch president*, one or more men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood may perform this ordinance. They place their hands lightly on the person's head. The one who performs the ordinance:

1. States the person's full name.
2. States that the ordinance is performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Confirms the person a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4. Bestows the gift of the Holy Ghost by saying, "Receive the Holy Ghost."
5. Gives a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.



Conferring the Priesthood and Ordaining to Priesthood Offices



The bishop or branch president oversees the conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordinations to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. Before a person is ordained to an office in the Aaronic Priesthood, he must be interviewed by the bishop or branch president and found worthy. Also, he must be sustained in a sacrament meeting. With the authorization of the bishop or branch president, a priest may confer the Aaronic Priesthood upon another person and ordain him to an Aaronic Priesthood office.

The stake or mission president oversees the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordination to the offices of elder and high priest.

To confer the priesthood or ordain a person to a priesthood office, one or more men who hold the required priesthood and who have been authorized by the presiding authority place their hands lightly on the person's

head. The one who performs the ordinance:

1. Calls the person by his full name.
2. States the authority (Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood) by which the ordination is being performed.
3. Confers the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood, unless it has been conferred earlier.
4. Ordains the person to an office in the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood and bestows the rights, powers, and authority of that office.
5. Gives a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Sacrament



The sacrament is a very sacred ordinance. Partaking of the sacrament provides opportunity to remember the life, teachings, and Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is a time to renew the covenants made with the Lord at the time of baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–10).

Teachers and priests may prepare the sacrament; priests may bless it; and deacons, teachers, and priests

may pass it. Brethren who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood may prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament but normally will do so only when too few Aaronic Priesthood brethren are available. If a person has committed a serious transgression, he should not prepare, bless, or pass the sacrament until he has repented and resolved the matter with his bishop or branch president.

Those who prepare, bless, or pass the sacrament are administering this ordinance to others on behalf of the Lord. Each one who holds the priesthood should approach this assignment with a solemn, reverent attitude. He should be well groomed, clean, and dressed modestly. Personal appearance should reflect the sacredness of the ordinance.

Brethren who prepare the sacrament should do so before the meeting begins. They place unbroken bread in clean bread trays and place trays of sacrament cups containing fresh water on the sacrament table. They cover the bread and water with a clean, white cloth.

During the sacrament hymn, those at the sacrament table remove the cloth from the bread trays and break the bread into small pieces. After the hymn, the person who blesses the bread kneels and offers the sacrament prayer for the bread. Brethren then pass the bread to those present in a reverent and orderly manner. The presiding authority at the meeting receives the sacrament first. When

everyone present has had an opportunity to partake of the bread, those passing it return their trays to the sacrament table. Those blessing the sacrament cover the trays again as soon as the bread has been passed.

Those at the sacrament table remove the cloth from the water trays. The person who blesses the water kneels and offers the sacrament prayer for the water. Brethren then pass the water to those present. The trays are returned to the sacrament table and are covered again. The brethren who bless and pass the sacrament then take their seats with the congregation.

The sacrament is for Church members, including children. The person conducting the meeting should not announce that it will be passed to members only; nothing should be done to prevent nonmembers from partaking of it.

The sacrament prayers are to be spoken clearly, accurately, and with dignity. If the person who blesses the sacrament makes an error in the wording and does not correct it himself, the bishop or branch president asks him to repeat the prayer and offer it correctly.

The prayer on the bread follows:

“O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal

Father, that 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. Amen” (D&C 20:77 and Moroni 4).

The prayer on the water follows:

“O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this [water] to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen” (D&C 20:79 and Moroni 5).

The sacrament should be cleared from the table as soon as possible after the meeting. Any bread that remains may be used for food.

Blessing and passing the sacrament requires authorization from the presiding authority.

Consecrating Oil

One man (or more) who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood consecrates pure olive oil for its holy purpose of anointing the sick or afflicted. The one who consecrates the oil:

1. Holds an open container of olive oil.
2. Addresses our Heavenly Father.

3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. Consecrates the oil (not the container) and sets it apart for anointing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.



Administering to the Sick

Only men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood may administer to the sick or afflicted. Normally, two or more administer together, but one may do it alone. If consecrated oil is not available, a man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may give a blessing by the authority of the priesthood.

A father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood should administer to sick members of his family. He may ask another man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to assist him.

Administering to the sick has two parts: (1) anointing with oil and (2) sealing the anointing.

Anointing with Oil

One man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood anoints the person who is sick. To do so, he:

1. Puts a drop of consecrated oil on the person's head.
2. Places his hands lightly on the person's head and calls the person by his or her full name.
3. States that he is anointing the person by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. States that he is anointing with oil that has been consecrated for anointing and blessing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Sealing the Anointing

Normally, two or more men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood place their hands lightly on the head of the person who is sick. One of the men seals the anointing. To do so, he:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that he is sealing the anointing by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives a blessing as the Spirit directs.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Father's Blessings and Other Blessings of Comfort and Counsel



Father's blessings and other priesthood blessings are given to provide direction and comfort as guided by the Spirit.

A father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may give father's blessings to his children. Such blessings may be especially helpful when children go away from home, such as to attend school or go on missions, or when they begin employment, get married, enter military service, or face unusual personal challenges. These blessings can be a great strength to a family. A family may record a father's blessing for family records, but it is not preserved in Church records. Parents should encourage children to seek father's blessings in times of need.

Worthy men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood also may give blessings of comfort and counsel to their wives, extended family members, and others who request them.

To give a father's blessing or other blessings of comfort and counsel, a man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood, either alone or with one or more worthy men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, places his hands lightly on the head of the person receiving the blessing. No oil is necessary for such blessings. The one giving the blessing:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that he is giving the blessing by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives a blessing as the Spirit directs.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Dedicating Graves

A person who dedicates a grave must hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and *must be authorized by the priesthood officer who conducts the service.*

To dedicate a grave, he:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father.
2. States that he is dedicating the grave by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Dedicates and consecrates the burial plot as the resting place for the body of the deceased.
4. Where appropriate, prays that the place will be hallowed and protected until the Resurrection.
5. Asks the Lord to comfort the family and expresses other thoughts as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

If the family prefers, a person (preferably a man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood) may offer a graveside prayer rather than a dedicatory prayer.

Obtaining Church Materials and Locating Information on Family History

Local leaders and other members may obtain Church materials, including scriptures, courses of study, Church magazines, garments, and temple clothing, from their Church distribution center or service center, from the Salt Lake Distribution Center, or through the Church's official Internet site, which is located at www.lds.org.

Information on family history work is available on the Church's family history Internet site, which is located at www.familysearch.org.

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