

ASIA AREA LOCAL PAGES

ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Improving Family Relationships

By Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Seventy

First Counselor in the Asia Area Presidency

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us the family is the most important unit in time and eternity. Nothing is more important, or potentially more rewarding or more challenging, than improving family relationships.

Living the gospel helps us grow. As we grow in faith, understanding, kindness, and charity, our family relationships also grow closer and more meaningful. Family home evening, weekly sacrament, current temple recommend—each can help strengthen our relationship with our Heavenly Father and our family members. The scriptures, *Church Handbook of Instructions (I)*, and “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” also all contain powerful principles to help us make our family united and strong now, and a forever family in eternity.

Restored gospel truths about family include:

“The family is ordained of God. It is the most important unit in time and in eternity” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church (2010)*, 1.1.1.).

Before we were born on the earth, we were spirits and daughters of heavenly parents. We are part of Heavenly Father’s family.

As part of Heavenly Father’s plan, we were born into families. Heavenly Father established families to bring us happiness, help us learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare us for eternal life.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes it possible to overcome physical death and spiritual death. This means family relationships can extend beyond death and the grave. It also means, through sacred

temple ordinances and covenants, faithfully kept, that we can be united eternally with our families.

Truths about improving family relationships include:

We improve family relationships by improving ourselves and by learning and growing together with other family members.

As we deepen our testimony of Jesus Christ, we strive to obey His commandments and want to share His blessings with our family and others.

Personal spiritual growth occurs as we draw closer to God. We grow spiritually through prayer, scripture study, pondering, and obedience.

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can be cleansed and sanctified from sin. The Savior’s Atonement can help us increase both our desire and our ability to improve our relationships with our family.

We improve family relationships only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned.

We improve family relations by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. If we see a need to correct a family member and feel prompted to do so by the Holy Ghost, we show forth afterwards an increase of love toward him who has been corrected.

As individuals and families, we change and grow faster, and with more enduring results, when we feel love and encouragement. Similarly, our family relationships improve faster, and with more enduring results, when we manifest love, confidence, and encouragement to each other.



Elder Gerrit W. Gong

Family relationships also improve when each person involved exhibits and receives clear communication, appreciation, mutual accommodation, and other ways of sharing and working for common goals.

Our families and family situations are all different. Some families are composed of a single individual—unmarried, separated, divorced or widowed. Some families have a husband and a wife. Some have children. Some families include several generations—grandparents, parents, and children. In some families, everyone is a member of the Church. In other families, some are not yet members of the Church. In every family, large or small, Church member or not yet Church member, as we live gospel principles we can improve our family relationships.

Here are some examples within our Asia Area:

Young Women, Young Men, Young Single Adults and Parents

In our Asia Area, many young men and young women, young single adults and single adults have joined the Church, or want to join the Church. At present, many of you are the only member of the Church in your family. In some cases, your father or mother may not yet understand the Church. Sometimes your father or mother may object to your attending church. Sometimes there can be some tension or lack of understanding in the family.

Here are two examples of how individuals in this situation improved their family relationships.

A faithful young man gained a strong testimony of the restored gospel. He wanted to join the Church, but his parents objected. He sought both to obey the commandment to love God and the commandment to honor father and mother. He said he learned how to do both. Each morning he politely greeted his parents, “Good morning, father.” “Good morning, mother.” He worked hard and did well in school. He was cheerful and obedient in performing his responsibilities at home. His parents saw the positive change in him. His parents then wanted him to join the Church. They wanted him to be

worthy and true to his beliefs. He has done so.

A young woman joined the Church, the only person in her family to do so. When she first learned about the gospel and wanted to join the Church, her father would not give permission. She waited many months before being able to be baptized. But she honored the Lord and also her parents. Since then, other family members have joined her in the Church. Faithful over many years, she is now a great-grandmother. Because of her faith and dedication, her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren were all born in the covenant.

You may have guessed the young woman I just mentioned is my own mother. We are eternally grateful she has faithfully established good relationships with her extended and immediate family over many years.

What these examples have in common is observance of both the first and fifth of the Ten Commandments. The first commandment invites our obedience and love of our Heavenly Father. The fifth commandment invites us to “Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”¹ As we love God and honor our parents, we can be pioneers in creating gospel culture while being respectful of the concerns and traditions of previous generations.

Husband or Wife with Each Other

In our Asia Area many faithful Church members join the Church before their husband or wife does. These dedicated brothers and sisters are faithful to the Church; they also love, help, and support their spouse and family. Worldwide Priesthood Leadership Training² has taught that priorities for fathers and priesthood brethren should be: first, spouse and family; second, employment (to support their family honorably and adequately); third, Church service; and finally, fourth, hobbies or personal interests.

By treating our spouse and family members as if they were already members of the Church, we

may help them accept the gospel. Love and faith have helped many husbands, wives, and other family members understand and accept the gospel and the temple, sometimes after many years. Whatever our family situation, the gospel teaches us to be kind, cheerful, respectful, and mutually supportive.

The gospel teaches husbands and wives to be loyal and committed to each other in every way. This includes being emotionally and mentally true to our spouse. One of the best ways to improve our family relationships is to be faithful and loyal to our spouse in thought and in action. Then our children can feel safe and secure in the mutual love and affection of their parents.

The gospel, including through our Savior's Atonement, can help us be better. If we have slipped or simply wish to do or be better, our Savior's love and Atonement can help us. As our hearts and affections are placed only on our spouse and family, our relationships with family will become even closer and sweeter.

Living the gospel each day increases our desire and our ability to love and forgive each other. As we serve, sacrifice for, and appreciate each other, our family grows closer. As we are humble and kind to each other, our family becomes more humble and kind. One of the greatest blessings we can have in time and eternity is to be part of a family. Through the restored gospel of Jesus Christ we can receive the principles, commandments, and covenants that can help us improve our family relationships each day and into eternity.

I pray we will love, encourage, support, and respect each family member, our husband or wife, and our generations of family members. As we do so, I pray our Heavenly Father will bless us with closer and sweeter family relationships. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Exodus 20:12.
2. Elder Quenin L. Cook, "Selected Principles from the New Handbooks," Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting 2010. lds.org.

Obedience to the Gospel Makes Successful Families

By Sathya Raghunath, Whitefield Branch, Bangalore

Families can be most successful when all the members in the family strive to obey the gospel teachings. Faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ helps us to overcome our trials and find comfort, joy and peace to move forward in life.

Whenever I face challenges in my family relationships I ask my Father in Heaven, "What should I do now to find the way?" The Lord reveals to me what I need to do.

The Lord expects us to be more forgiving and forgetting, and kinder to others. This will not only bring peace at home but also to our souls.

I would like to share a quote by Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don't judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is

accepting someone's differences, weaknesses and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn't handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of

Sathya Raghunath along with her family members in front of the Hong Kong Temple. From left: Sathya Raghunath, Ammon Lance, Brother Raghunath, Sarah Jane, and Chikka Akkamma.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SATHYA RAGHUNATH

another's weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other. . . .

"If we look into each other's hearts and understand the unique challenges each of us faces, I think we would treat each other much more gently, with more love, patience, tolerance and care.

"If the adversary can influence us to pick on each other, to find fault, bash and undermine, to judge or humiliate or taunt, half his battle is won. Why? Because though this sort of conduct may not equate with succumbing to grievous sin, it nevertheless neutralizes us spiritually. The Spirit of the Lord cannot dwell where there is bickering, judging, contention or any kind of bashing" ("The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword," *Ensign*, May 1992).

Our responsibility is not only to watch over and strengthen each family member during the present times, but also, in an eternal perspective, to work towards preparing our family members for exaltation!

It is through the powerful way of scripture study that I as a mother of two children teach my children the principles of the gospel in a fun-filled manner.

Whenever I experience trials and troubled times, scripture study helps me to know whether it is the will of the Father. If my trials are the will of the Father, I will be more cheerful and willing to learn the lessons of life.

Whenever I feel lonely, and when the whole world seems uncertain, whenever I want to feel my Saviour's love toward me, I kneel down and pray to God. During this time, wonderful verses from the scriptures flow into my mind.

I would like to share two such verses. One is from Doctrine and Covenants 18:10: "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God." This verse makes me realize that I am a precious daughter of God, and I am important to Him.

Another verse which flows into my mind is from John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

I know that God, who is above all, brings these verses to my remembrance and shows me that He loves and cares for me, and that is the reason why He has blessed me with one of the greatest blessings of my life. That blessing is the members of my family.

Our Heavenly Father loves us so much that He encircles us with His arms of love. It is because of His infinite love toward us that He wants to raise His children toward eternal life. As it says in Moses 1:39: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." Of this I bear my testimony. ■



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF KAUSALYA ARUMUGAM

Kausalya Arumugam along with her family members. From left: Selvi Arumugam, Mayuri Arumugam, Deepika Arumugam, Kausalya Arumugam, President Arumugam Muniswamy, and Dorai Murugan.

Creating Happiness in the Family

Kausalya Arumugam, K.G.F. Branch

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have this opportunity to have the restored gospel — the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ, and to know that our existence on this earth is according to God's plan of happiness. According to this plan of happiness, we came to this earth to be tested whether we will choose Jesus Christ, be baptised and follow Him. Hence, we are all born in wonderful families to learn and to gain wisdom.

Family is central to God's plan because the greatest of the Lord's work is done within the four walls of our homes. To have a happy family we need to improve our Christlike attributes, which leads us to be kind and show our love in the service within our own family. When we share our responsibility within our family and teach one another we can better improve and strengthen the family with more understanding and love. Family is the place to learn from our own mistakes and improve ourselves by making an effort every day to follow Jesus Christ.

May God help us to keep His laws, live honourable lives, preserve our virtue and integrity, listen to the whispering of the Holy Spirit, and seek diligently to purify ourselves so that not a single member of this family will be lost by deviating from the straight and narrow path. May we all prove ourselves worthy to come forth in the morning of the First Resurrection crowned with glory, perpetuating in immortality the family union, and continue to increase down through the endless ages of eternity. ■

The Restored Gospel and the Church Have Brought Wonderful Blessings into My Family

Nazeera Pathan, Mumbai

Family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children because we learn most of the things required to attain eternal life in the family itself. Parenthood is the most important and powerful assignment we have in this life. If we as parents strive to follow Jesus Christ, our children will also learn to follow Him, which enables them to qualify for eternal life. We teach our daughter by trying to do the things which we want our daughter to do, because children do exactly what the parents do.

By understanding each other properly and by respecting and listening to each other, husbands and wives, though different individuals, can strive to be one. Nurturing love and friendship in our marriage is a daily exercise. We need to control the feelings which separate us from our family and express our love and gratitude to all the members of our family at every situation. We need to always remember that this family is given to us by our Heavenly Father.

My spouse and I pray together, share personal experiences and encourage each other to serve in the Church in order to increase our faith in Jesus Christ. We work together to follow the basic principles of money management by making our monthly budget, and whenever necessary, we cut some of the expenses which are not so important by reminding our family members that God knows what is important for us.

I discharge my obligation towards my family effectively by keeping my commitments to accomplish certain important tasks towards my family and by seeking help when I don't have enough time or knowledge to do it. Watching doctrinal movies, singing the hymns and children's songs, sometimes going out for dinner are a few ideas and activities I have

used to spend quality time with my family in order to nurture each member of my family. I seek to learn something new about the interests, needs and challenges of my family members by asking them and sometimes by observing their behavior. By managing the time and money which ever is needed for my family, I meet the needs of the members of my family.

Going to the temple is our high priority as a family. My personal testimony along with my conversion to the teachings of Jesus Christ makes it possible for me to return to the presence of God and for my family to be united eternally. I share my spiritual experiences with my family members whenever the time permits. I believe that this helps my family to be united.

It is inevitable in every family to keep forgiving and repenting. As it says in Ether 12:27: "And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them". Though I get angry easily, I know that God's grace is sufficient for me to get over my weaknesses.

There were times in my life when I had made wrong decisions, and when I realized the truth, I felt bad for what I had done. I repented before God and asked for His forgiveness before my family. Immediately, my family members explained to me how much they loved me. I really felt my heart was so light, and I could feel the peace of Jesus Christ. Now, they love me and believe me that I won't

Nazeera Pathan along with her family: Sandeep Swarna, Amelia Zeniff Swarna, and Nazeera Pathan.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NAZEERA PATHAN

make any such mistakes again. I am happy for my family and grateful for my Lord for giving me this feeling of His peace when I repented.

I fortify my family against worldly influences by inviting the members of the Church and missionaries to help my family understand the doctrine of Jesus Christ and by my daily prayers.

I testify that we can achieve happiness in our family lives and have successful families by believing in one another, sharing our feelings and experiences, thinking wisely in difficult situations, understanding, listening to each other, solving their problems together, having daily prayers personally and as a family, attending church regularly, reading

the scriptures to seek knowledge and guidance and by loving each other just the way Jesus Christ loved us. Family members can show their love and care for each member in their family with kind words and deeds.

I would like to conclude by quoting President David O. McKay: “I have but one thought in my heart for the young folk of the Church and that is that they be happy. I know of no other place than home where more happiness can be found in this life. It is possible to make home a bit of heaven; indeed, I picture heaven to be a continuation of the ideal home” (*Gospel Ideals*, 490). When we have love at home our homes can be a bit of heaven! ■

Families Together Forever

By Rosaline Sathiyakumar, Whitefield Branch, Bangalore

“And thus let those of whom I have spoken be planted in the land of Zion, as speedily as can be, with their families, to do those things even as I have spoken” (D&C 57:14).

“Families can be together forever.” As families are the vital part of God’s plan of salvation, the Lord wants every one of us to multiply and replenish and be happy with our family forever. He loves us and trusts us that we will do our best to improve and strengthen our relationships with our loved ones.

To improve our relationships with all our family members we need to pray to God to help us. We need to show that kind of love to every member which will make us see the good in the family members so that their mistakes and weaknesses look very small.

We need to always pray for our family members that their burdens and sorrows in their hearts are reduced and keep ourselves worthy to have the companionship of the Spirit of God so that we are led in the right path.

The greatest joys and the greatest sorrows we experience are in family relationships, and to improve the relationships it is very essential to have a proper communication between the family members. Communication cultivates love, trust and respect, and more important, it helps the family overcome the twists and turns of life and plays a significant part in building and nurturing a family.

I would like to discuss seven important things we need to do to improve our family relationships.

Love

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind” (1 Cor. 13:4). President David O. McKay said, “The spirit of kindness is as enduring as love itself. Let us go home, and if we have been cruel, either by treating our wives with indifference, or by scolding, or loud talking, if we have been cruel to our children by neglect, or by striking them, let us see if we cannot repent and look introspectively and see whether or not we are to blame for some of the conditions that arouse these passions” (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1951, 178).

Love is charity—the pure love of Christ. The joy we experience when we put the welfare of others above our own is worth experiencing. We experience sorrow because of our selfishness, which is the absence of love. A man and a woman are to make sacred covenants that they will put the

welfare and happiness of the other at the centre of their lives. Children are to be born into a family where the parents hold the needs of children equal to their own in importance. And children are to love parents and each other. That is the ideal of a loving family.

Listen and Think before We Speak

To improve our relationships with our family members, it is very important to understand our loved ones. In order to understand, it is very important to listen to them carefully. Listen to child or spouse by putting off all other things and try to understand the feelings they are conveying. Family communication goes beyond mere exchange of words. It is important to think first before saying something. We should carefully ponder the words we have to say. If we are angry, upset or need to convey emotions that may stimulate conflict or stir up negative emotions, instead of using harsh language, we can express our feelings by stating how we feel.

Show Interest

Often in communicating with our loved ones, we tend to take interest only in what we have to say. This should be avoided; we should always take a genuine interest in what the other has to say. Parents who take interest with what their child or their spouse has to say cultivate healthier family relationships. Giving your

undivided attention to your loved one even for a short period of time is much better than spending longer times together while distracted and not fully present.

Mind Your Tone

It is equally important to mind our tone. It has been said that one should tame the tongue to avoid uttering hurtful or sinister words. In the same way kind words and sweet and thoughtful tones are always heartfelt and can uplift the soul. Correspondingly, pay attention not only to what you say, but how you speak and express yourself to your family.

Trust and Spend Quality Time with Family Members

Trust will always be an essential ingredient in every relationship. Accordingly, it also plays an important part in family communication. Trust your family and inspire trust from your family. Keep

*David Sammeta,
Merlyn Riya
Sathiyakumar,
Emmelyn Pearl
Sathiyakumar,
Rosaline
Sathiyakumar,
and Stanley
Sathiyakumar.*

your promises; always be true to them. Maintain confidences; this encourages trust and commitment between you and your family. It is necessary for every family to find and make quality family time. Family time is the perfect venue to have fun together and can involve any number of activities. It can also be used to watch family movies together. Such lighthearted moments help the family to enjoy each other's company and can pave the way to easy communication and sharing of jokes, to exchanging funny events of the day. Quality family time is indeed a key to good communication and in maintaining love and peaceful coexistence in the family.

Discuss Issues and Problems

Being open to discussing issues and problems is another key to improving family communication. Issues must be discussed in a manner that is beneficial to the family. It is not advisable to use the discussion to blame each other; rather, a healthy exchange of views and problem-solving will help the family bond.

Forgive and Forget

We all have felt the need of asking for pardon from our spouse or to forgive a child for some mistake or disobedience. These moments come in our lives very often, and it becomes easy for us to ask for forgiveness or to forgive others when we feel the love of the Lord and ponder what the Lord Himself



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ROSALINE SATHIYAKUMAR

would have done and what we need to do in order to receive forgiveness. And as the promise was given in 3 Nephi 22:13: “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace

of thy children.” As we strive to be faithful in keeping the commandments, we will be blessed with peace and joy within us and within our families.

I know that as we do our best

to improve and strengthen our family relationships, we will be happy and will be an instrument in the hands of the Lord and will be able to live with our family members for eternity. ■

Application of the Gospel in Our Lives Creates a Peaceful Family

By Annamma Swarna

I know that family is the centre of the Creator’s plan for our happiness. Happiness in our families can only be achieved through living the gospel of Jesus Christ and His teachings. The most important work we can do is within the walls of our own home. I have tasted the sweetness of being in a family where we share the same faith; I know that this is the same family we will be in for eternity.

I had an experience on my mission that whenever I spoke to people about families I saw a special response, because all yearn and want to be happy with their families. There is no perfect family, because everyone has problems and challenges. But it is a great help when the family is founded upon the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially those which are found in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”, which are “faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities”. As I have tried to do these things, I have seen the blessings of peace and improved relationships within my family.

There were times when I found myself to be sad because of various challenges in my family. During this time, I was doing my Personal Progress and came across Matthew 5:9, which says, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”, so I decided that day that I want to be the peacemaker and a child of God. By doing so I saw harmony in my family; we were

able to face challenges with peace and hope.

Family prayers and family home evening are so helpful, though they seem to be small and simple. This prepares us for eternity. One thing I learned to do in my family is to talk to each other openly and frequently as individuals and as a family. This helped me know what my family thinks and expects of me.

I would like to share one of my favourite scriptures from the Book of Mormon, Jacob 3:7, which says: “Behold, their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and their wives love their children.” I know that if we love our families even with the pure love of Christ our relationships with our family improves, and Heavenly Father will be happy—and He always wants us to be happy.

I know accepting and living the gospel blesses families. We can be together forever if we make and keep those sacred covenants in the temple. I know that Jesus is the Living Christ. The Church is true. The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ. ■

Annamma Swarna during her mission.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANNAMMA SWARNA

