



OUR FAMILY

A Practical Guide for Building
a Gospel-Centered Home

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What Is a Gospel-Centered Home?



A gospel-centered home is a place where family members learn to love the gospel and to worthily participate in priesthood ordinances. It is a place where they grow in faith in God and in their love for him, for his restored gospel, and for one another. The Spirit of the Lord resides there.

The father is the divinely appointed head of the home; and the mother, as copartner, presides in his absence. Father and mother counsel together, nurturing their children and teaching them to center their lives on Christ and his gospel.

The principles in this booklet apply to all members of the Church. Even if you live alone or are the only Church member in your family, you can adapt these suggestions to help you make yours a gospel-centered home.

What Should We Do on the Sabbath Day?



The Lord has commanded us to “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). The Sabbath is the day when we nourish our souls with spiritual truths and experiences.

It is not merely a day to rest from work, but it is a sacred day when we meet with fellow Saints in reverent worship and renew our covenants with the Lord.

Throughout this special day, we should direct our thoughts and actions specifically toward God. We should plan with our family to keep the entire Sabbath day holy, both by dressing appropriately and by spending our time wisely.

As you plan your Sunday activities, you may want to set aside time for your family to be together, for personal study and meditation, and for service to others.

You might want to —

1. Read the scriptures, conference reports, and Church publications.
2. Study the lives and teachings of the prophets.
3. Prepare Church lessons and other Church assignments.
4. Write in journals.
5. Pray and meditate.
6. Write to or visit relatives and friends.
7. Write to missionaries.
8. Enjoy uplifting music.
9. Have family gospel instruction.
10. Hold family council meetings.
11. Build husband-wife relationships.
12. Read with a child.
13. Do genealogical research, including the four-generation program and family or personal histories.
14. Sing Church hymns.
15. Read uplifting literature.
16. Develop appreciation for the cultural arts.
17. Plan family home evening study and activities.
18. Plan other family activities.
19. Friendship nonmembers.
20. Fellowship neighbors.
21. Visit the sick, the aged, and the lonely.
22. Hold interviews with family members.

Enjoying Monday Evening (Family Home Evening)



Reserve Monday nights for family home evening, and plan gospel instruction and other activities that will be enjoyable and meaningful for the whole family.

The father presides, and he either conducts or asks a family member to conduct the meeting. He may teach the lesson or ask his wife or a child to teach. Every family member should participate in some way. For example, small children can pray, lead music, quote scripture, answer questions, hold pictures, or serve refreshments.

The following is an example of a family home evening gospel study program:

1. Opening song (by family)
2. Opening prayer (by a child)
3. Poem or scripture reading (by a family member)
4. Lesson (by father, mother, or an older child)
5. An appropriate activity or game (led by a family member, with the whole family participating)
6. Closing song (by family)
7. Closing prayer (by a family member)
8. Refreshments

As you plan family gospel study, counsel together to determine the needs of the family. Family home evening manuals can help you plan gospel instruction. The manuals contain interesting lessons and give suggestions for activities that are especially appropriate for families with children. You may also wish to use the scriptures, general conference talks, Church magazines, manuals such as *Gospel Principles*, and other good books to prepare gospel lessons and discussions.

Other activities that bring family members together, strengthen their love for each other, and help them live righteously are also appropriate for family home evening.

Other Monday evening activities might include—

1. Any of the activities suggested for Sundays.
2. Family games.
3. Family service projects.
4. Sharing talents with family members.
5. Home beautification projects.
6. Gardening.
7. Inventory of year's supply.
8. Other food storage projects.
9. Home production projects.
10. Planning for vacations and special activities.
11. Family council meetings.
12. Planning or participating in a physical fitness program.
13. Fellowshiping nonmember friends.
14. Recreational activities.

Learning the Gospel in the Home



In a gospel-centered home, each family member should have a plan for individual gospel study centered on the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. In addition to personal plans for gospel study, you may wish to gather with your family for a few minutes each day to study the scriptures and other gospel books, or you may wish to plan special gospel study sessions on Sundays.

Having Informal Gospel Discussions



Gospel discussions do not need to be formal or structured. Mealtimes can provide good opportunities for talking about gospel principles, especially as they relate to our daily lives. As families work together around the home, parents can discuss the gospel informally with their children. What better opportunity could there be to talk about the miracle of life than when parents and children plant a garden together? Parents can teach their children to value cleanliness and to take pride in their surroundings as they clean the house or yard together. Such experiences can strengthen family relationships and help children understand how to apply gospel principles in everyday living.

A child's questions often provide valuable teaching opportunities. When a child asks a question, parents should listen and take the time to answer the question or to help guide the child to find an answer for himself. A wise parent will also ask the child questions as they work together, helping the child reach conclusions and form values based on the teachings of the Lord.

Parents should also seek opportunities to spend time alone with each child. A child's feelings of self-worth and his understanding of his Heavenly Father's plan increase when parents show sincere interest and love.

Some of a child's most pleasant memories of his home and parents can be made when a parent tells a bedtime story.

Individual and Family Prayers



he Lord has admonished us, “Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (D&C 88:119). Perhaps nothing draws families closer to each other and to their Heavenly Father than individual and family prayer.

Each family member should regularly have the opportunity to act as voice for the family in daily family prayer. Even small children can take their turn praying, with parents giving assistance if necessary. Through family prayer, parents can teach the principles of faith, humility, and love. Family members will also draw closer as they consider one another's needs and pray for each other every morning and evening.

Children should be taught that they should pray whenever they need special help and in times of thanksgiving. Prayers can be strengthened by sincere and purposeful fasting.

Creating a Gospel Environment in the Home



Listening to uplifting music and singing hymns and songs as the family works, plays, and travels can bring beauty and the Spirit of the Lord into the home.

The decoration of your home can reflect the gospel when you display photographs of family members, pictures of temples and prophets, uplifting quotations, fine paintings, or reproductions of great art.

You can establish family traditions and teach gospel principles on such special days as Christmas, Easter, family birthdays, and the anniversaries of such events as the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood and the organization of the Church.

Holding Family Councils and Private Interviews



The family council is the most basic council of the Church. Under the direction of the father and the mother, this council can meet to discuss family problems, work out finances, make plans, support and strengthen family members, and pray for one another and for the family unit. Most importantly, this council should set goals that will help each member to achieve exaltation. This council should meet whenever a need exists. You may want to hold a meeting each Sunday. An atmosphere of listening, honest communication, and respect for the opinions and feelings of others is vital to the success of these meetings.

Some parents have found that regular private interviews help them to draw close to, encourage, and teach the gospel to their children. Such interviews may be informal. During the interview, the parent should express love for the child. The child should have an opportunity to express his feelings about any subject, problem, or experience. The parent should be a good listener and should take the child's problems and confidences seriously. Prayer could well be an appropriate part of these sacred experiences.

Teaching the Law of Tithes and Offerings



Parents should set good examples, teaching children to pay tithing before they spend or deposit their money. Parents should show them how to calculate 10 percent of their increase,

how to fill out a tithing donation slip, how to give it to the bishop, and how to keep proper records.

Help your children understand the law of tithing by discussing how tithes and offerings are used. Testify of the blessings that flow from paying tithing, fast offerings, and other contributions. Attend tithing settlement as a family each year.

When parents teach the law of tithing, they also teach the principles of faith, honesty, industry, thrift, and self-reliance.

Teaching the Lord's Moral Standard



Parents are responsible for helping their children understand and live the Lord's moral standard. They should teach their children this standard so well that they can clearly recognize and avoid evil.

Parents can successfully teach virtue to children only if they set the proper example: "Be thou an example of the believer, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). In order to be an example in word and conversation, parents must themselves have pure thoughts. Our thoughts dictate our words and actions, which ultimately shape our character.

Movies, television, magazines, and other media that enter our homes can have a powerful influence on our families. Much popular entertainment is not uplifting and makes immorality seem harmless or even desirable. Thoughtfully consider and carefully choose the influences that you allow in your home so that your home will be an uplifting place to be.

The Lord highly values modesty and virtue. Modesty is reflected in the way we speak and dress. Teach your children that our bodies are the temples where our spirits dwell. They must be kept pure and worthy in order for us to live with God.

Children should also learn that God has provided a sacred power within our bodies. This power allows us to be parents, to give other spirits the opportunity of coming to earth. God has given us the law of chastity to help us use this sacred power wisely.

Fulfilling Our Basic Family Genealogical Responsibility



In a family home evening, you can use the scriptures (see D&C 2:128) to help the family feel the spirit of genealogy and temple work. Your specific responsibilities as a family should include the following:

1. *Complete and submit your four-generation records.* You may want to hold an activity to help the family begin working on their four-generation records. During this activity, each family member could place his own name on a blank pedigree chart. Then the whole family could work together to fill in the chart, asking relatives to provide information that the family does not remember.

Along with completing the pedigree chart back through the great-grandparents, each family member could fill out a family group record form for each married couple on the chart. Using the proper submission forms, the family should send to the Genealogical Department names of any of these ancestors who have not received temple ordinances. Whenever possible, do research beyond the fourth generation.

The four-generation records are an important part of the book of remembrance, which also contains other sacred family records and personal and family histories. Each member of the family should compile an accurate, well-organized book of remembrance.

2. *Write personal and family histories.* A latter-day prophet has said:

“I urge all of the people of this church to give serious attention to their family histories, . . . and let no family go into eternity without having left their memoirs for their children, their grandchildren, and their posterity. . . . I urge every person to start their children out writing a personal history and journal.” (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, p. 4; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 4.)

Each family member could begin a history project by putting into a box every record he can find about himself. After arranging these items in the order in which they happened, each person can begin a personal history by writing the story behind each item.

3. *Attend the temple regularly.* Our first responsibility is to have our own family sealed in the temple. Teach your children that millions of people have died without hearing the gospel and that they can go to the temple in behalf of the dead and perform all the ordinances necessary for their exaltation. Help your children feel the importance of temple work by talking often about your ancestors and expressing your love for them.
4. *Participate in the records extraction program when called to do so.* Under the supervision of local priesthood leaders, members identify names from records provided by the Church. These names are sent to the Genealogical Department and then to temples, where the necessary ordinances are performed by proxies.

Teaching Our Children to Serve Others



By example we should teach our children that service means helping others in many ways, including doing small acts of kindness, working on welfare projects, and sharing the gospel. As we show compassion for others, we can help our children to develop the love that will motivate them to serve. Give your children opportunities to have good experiences with serving others, both within and outside the home.

Preparing Temporally as a Family



Members of the Church are commanded by the Lord to be self-reliant and independent to the extent of their ability (see D&C 78:13-14). Each family should set goals and plan

activities that will help them become self-reliant by doing the following. A family should—

1. *Have a specific plan for physical fitness and social-emotional health.* This plan should help a family practice sound principles of nutrition, physical fitness, weight control, immunization, sanitation, accident prevention, and dental and medical care. Family members should also acquire skills in safety and first aid, home nursing, and food selection and preparation.

Social-emotional strength is a blessing that comes when we apply the principles of the gospel in our personal and family lives. We grow stronger when we love and serve our neighbors and when we develop respect for ourselves through righteous living and self-mastery.

2. *Prepare educationally and vocationally for financial stability and avoid unnecessary debt.* Family members should become skilled in reading, writing, and mathematics. A knowledge of these skills can help them have more satisfying lives and can also enhance their career opportunities. The head of each household should choose and acquire the necessary training for a suitable vocation or profession.

Encourage your children to take advantage of their opportunities to learn at school, in the home, and on their own. Help your children choose careers that will meet their future economic needs and give them personal satisfaction.

Avoid unnecessary debt, and work to pay all debts of any kind.

3. *Have a one-year's supply of food, clothing, and (if possible) fuel.* Learn, teach, and practice the skills of canning, freezing, and drying foods. Grow a garden and provide food for yourselves as much as possible.
4. *Be willing to sacrifice by giving time, talents, and means in behalf of the Church, the community, and the needy.* Generously share your time, talents, and means to lift and bless the lives of those around you, remembering the Savior's admonition: "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



Every member of the Church has a responsibility to share the gospel with others (see D&C 38:40-41; 88:81). President Spencer W. Kimball has said:

“No person who has been converted to the gospel should shirk his responsibility to teach the truth to others. This is our privilege. This is our duty. This is a command from the Lord.” (*Ensign*, Oct. 1977, p. 3.)

Although most Church members want to share the gospel with their friends, many either do not know how to begin friendship with nonmembers or are timid about discussing the Church with others. One of the most important ways to do missionary work is by living the gospel of Jesus Christ and being an example to those around us. The following suggestions can also help family members feel the spirit of missionary work, build their confidence, and become fully involved in sharing the gospel with others:

1. *Prepare children, especially sons, for missions.* Parents can do this by teaching the gospel in the home; having personal and family scripture study; teaching children to pray and to obey the law of chastity; and talking often about the responsibilities, blessings, and joys of sharing the gospel. Teach your sons to save for a mission and teach all your children to work; to be thrifty, resourceful, and self-reliant; and to study other languages and learn about other cultures.
2. *Prepare yourselves to serve a mission.* Couples who are financially able should also prepare themselves to serve missions when their children are grown. Couples can prepare in much the same way as younger missionaries. Specifically, they should learn about other cultures, study other languages, and maintain good physical health.

3. *Share the gospel with friends and neighbors.*
Prayerfully select a nonmember friend or family. Plan activities that will develop your friendship with them and interest them in the gospel. Invite them to learn more about the Church. Maintain your friendship with those who are not ready for baptism. Fellowship those who do become members of the Church. (See the October 1977 issue of the *Ensign*.)
4. *Give financial support to missionary work.* This support should include contributions to the general missionary fund.

Family members who take part in these and other missionary activities will have the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gives the power necessary to successfully do missionary work (see 1 Nephi 13:37; D&C 100:5-8).

Resources to Help Your Family



The Church and its resources exist to help exalt the family. Home teachers and other priesthood and auxiliary leaders are organized to assist your family. You should use these resources when you need them.

The *Gospel Principles* manual (31110) discusses basic gospel principles in an easily understandable manner and has sixteen pages of color illustrations, plus other pictures. It also contains scripture reading suggestions, study questions, a glossary of terms, and selected Church hymns. It is an excellent resource for family gospel discussions as well as for individual study.

Other supplementary materials include the Church magazines, books of scripture stories for beginning readers published by the Church, and family home evening manuals.

Two music resources that may be especially helpful to your family are *Hymns* (31243), the official Church hymnbook, and *Children's Songbook* (31246).

THE CHURCH OF
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