

A Christ-centered Home

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The Savior taught, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). This scripture teaches us that if we love the Lord and obey his commandments, he will be with us—in our individual lives and in our homes. We should strive to make our homes worthy places for him to make his abode.

Even though we love the Lord and desire to establish Christ-centered homes, our circumstances differ. We may live alone, belong to part-member families, be single parents, be parents of preschoolers or of teenagers, or not have any children living at home. Not every family member may want to live righteously. We may find that our own spirituality fluctuates. But, despite our family situations and our own spiritual fluctuations, we can all do important things that will help to center the activities of our homes more completely on the Savior.

We Can Center Our Homes on Christ by Creating a Spiritual Environment

Shortly before he became President of the Church, Ezra Taft Benson made a statement that suggests how we as individuals might make a difference in our homes. "The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. . . . The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, p. 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, p. 6). It is by beginning with ourselves, working from the inside out, that we influence the spiritual environments in our homes.

Prayer

Personal and family prayers are essential if our homes are to be centered on the Savior. Every woman, no matter what her circumstances, can have daily personal prayer. Prayer helps us

focus on the most important things in life as we express gratitude for blessings, evaluate our needs, and repent of transgressions. One busy mother has found that her prayers are most effective if she prays alone, aloud, and on her knees.

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 turns 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. Some families like to sing a hymn or repeat a verse of scripture before praying. This kind of family devotional can set a spiritual tone in the home. Those living alone can do the same.

Gospel Study

Studying the gospel regularly is also part of a Christ-centered home. Although there are many good books published about the gospel, we need to go to the source of divine instruction. We have been admonished to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3). We should also study the counsel from our prophet and other General Authorities. It is from these sacred sources that we can find answers to questions and problems, comfort and guidance.

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, parents may wish to gather the family together for a few minutes each day to study the scriptures. Sunday is an appropriate time for individual and family gospel study. It is important for family members to have their own copies of the scriptures, if possible. Everyone has time for at least one verse a day. We would do well to read at least a chapter a day or set aside a certain amount of time to read each day.

Family Home Evening

Prophets today have designated family home evening as an important time to focus on the teachings of Christ within our homes. President David O. McKay said: "Families who prayerfully prepare and consistently hold their weekly Home Evenings, and who work together during the week to apply the lessons in their lives, will be blessed. There will be better feelings between husband and wife, between parents and children, and among children. In such homes, the Spirit of the Lord will be made manifest" (*Family Home Evening Manual* 1967, pp. iii-iv).

All Church members—not just families with a father, mother, and children—are encouraged to schedule a regular, meaningful home evening. Single adults, couples, single-parent families, and families with children of all ages can help to center their home lives on Christ by holding family home evenings.

We Can Center Our Homes on Christ by Providing Uplifting Physical Surroundings

In addition to prayer, gospel study, and family home evenings, we can focus our families on Christ by creating an uplifting physical atmosphere in our homes. Although spirituality must come from within, we can sometimes nurture Christlike qualities through external influences.

We can surround ourselves with reminders that Christ has a place in our homes. As President Ezra Taft Benson observed, “Enter [the homes of those who have been born again], and the pictures on their walls, the books on their shelves, the music in the air, their words and acts reveal them as Christians” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, p. 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, pp. 6–7).

Some families choose to display scriptures that are meaningful to them. As one mother explained, “I find that keeping important scriptures in sight is a good way to remind me and my children of correct principles without constantly preaching them.” Others display pictures of scriptural scenes and the nearest temple. Pictures of family members in front of the temples where they were married or in places where they labored as missionaries can serve as reminders of worthwhile goals to other family members.

Church magazines—the *Friend*, the *New Era*, and the *Ensign*—provide inspirational and enjoyable reading for the entire family. Playing and singing the hymns and Primary songs, as well as other uplifting music, contributes to a spiritual environment.

Periodically, we might assess our surroundings to see if we have the kind of home atmosphere in which the Savior would be happy to “make his abode.” As we try to establish a Christ-centered home, it becomes especially important to ask ourselves if the Savior would be comfortable with the kinds of art, literature, music, and television programs we allow in our homes.

During family councils and home evenings, we can discuss what things family members should see and hear, and then together set family standards for all to observe. We can also keep in mind that, in addition to the gospel-oriented material mentioned, there are many works of art, music, and literature that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” that can enrich our lives (see Articles of Faith 1:13).

We Can Center Our Homes on Christ by Seeing the Spiritual Significance of the Activities within Our Homes

The Lord said, "Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal" (D&C 29:34). To God, all things are spiritual, and we should strive to see everything that happens in our homes in terms of its spiritual significance.

Elder John A. Widtsoe explained: "There is a spiritual meaning of all human acts and earthly events. . . . It is the business of man to find the spiritual meaning of earthly things. . . . No man is quite so happy, I think, as he who backs all his labors by such a spiritual interpretation and understanding of the acts of his life" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1922, pp. 96-97).

We must each perform many seemingly mundane tasks, but even these can be spiritually meaningful in our personal and family lives when we focus on Christ and our eternal potential.

An excellent way to reinforce the attitude that our homes are sacred places and that every activity within them can have spiritual significance is to dedicate our homes. Homes can be dedicated as sanctuaries where the Holy Spirit abides and where family members can worship, find safety from the world, grow spiritually, and prepare for eternal family relationships. Homes should not be consecrated to the Lord. This consecration should be limited to Church buildings, which are given to the Lord. Homes need not be free of debt to be dedicated.

Parents of one family carefully prepared their seven children for a dedication service. First, they gave a family home evening lesson based on section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants. They discussed how verses 119 through 126 could be applied in their family life. Then, they set aside a fast Sunday for the dedication service. This gave each person time to meditate on the kind of home he desired to have and what he could contribute to it. At the conclusion of the fast, the family gathered for this special family meeting. They sang a hymn, and each person was invited to share his feelings about the home and family. The father then dedicated the home. The family felt a great sense of peace and security in their home following this spiritual experience.

According to Elder Neal A. Maxwell: "The affection and thoughtfulness required in the home are no abstract exercises in love, no mere rhetoric concerning some distant human cause. Family life is an encounter with raw selfishness, with the need for civility, of taking turns, of being hurt and yet forgiving, and of being at the mercy of others' moods.

"Family life is a constant challenge, not a periodic performance we can render on a stage and then run for the privacy of a dressing room to be alone with ourselves. The home gives us our greatest chance, however, to align our public and private behavior, to reduce the hypocrisy in our lives—to be more congruent with Christ" (*That My Family Should Partake* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 3).

The Savior was consistently loving and patient with others. As we become "congruent with Christ," we will learn to treat others with this same kind of consideration. We may perhaps have a roommate, an employer or co-worker, parents, a spouse, or a child who is ill-tempered, difficult to get along with at times, or even wayward. But when we understand that they are our eternal brothers and sisters, we will be better able to treat them with love, despite their actions.

President Gordon B. Hinckley explained: "Quiet talk is the language of love. It is the language of peace. It is the language of God. It is when we raise our voices that tiny mole hills of difference become mountains of conflict. . . .

"There is need for much discipline in marriage, not of one's companion but of one's self. Husbands, wives, remember, 'He [or she] that is slow to anger is better than the mighty' (Proverbs 16:32). Cultivate the art of the soft answer. It will bless your homes, it will bless your lives, it will bless your companionships, it will bless your children" (*Cornerstones of a Happy Home* [pamphlet, 1984], p. 8).

Conclusion

Shortly after Christ's crucifixion, two of his disciples were walking to Emmaus, saddened by the cruel death of their friend Jesus. As they conversed about what had happened, a stranger joined them and proceeded to expound the scriptures to them along the way. Approaching their village, they said to the stranger, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening." As he ate with them in their home, the eyes of their understanding were opened and they knew that the resurrected Lord had honored them with his presence. (See Luke 24:13–35.)

We can make of our homes places where we would be comfortable to have the Savior come. We can help to create a spiritual atmosphere in our homes, make sure the physical surroundings are uplifting, and do everything we can to make our homes sacred places. Then the Savior will answer our pleas that he abide with us and will honor us with his Spirit.

Suggestions for Teachers

1. Ask the sisters to identify ways in which they can make the environment of their homes more spiritually uplifting.
2. Ask: How can personal and family prayers contribute to a spiritual environment? When has reading from the scriptures helped you to teach, solve a problem, or give guidance or comfort? How can parents encourage family members to study the gospel regularly? How do family home evenings contribute to a spiritual environment in our homes?
3. Discuss ways to create an uplifting physical environment in the home.
4. Read Doctrine and Covenants 29:34 and Elder Widtsoe's statement. Ask: How can we see the "spiritual meaning of earthly things"? What is the meaning of the Lord's statement, "All things unto me are spiritual"?
5. Discuss how dedicating our homes might focus our families' attention more on the Savior and help to create a more spiritual environment in our homes.
6. Point out that there is a special spirit in the homes of those who are trying to center their lives on the Savior and his teachings. Emphasize that creating this spirit in our homes is a continuing task. Our attitudes and efforts will influence those around us and help them to center their lives on the Savior.
7. You may want to have the sisters sing "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide" (*Hymns*, no. 165).