

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL



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Comments and Suggestions

Your comments and suggestions about this manual would be appreciated.
Please submit them to:

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Please list your name, address, ward, and stake. Be sure to give the title of the manual. Then offer your comments and suggestions about the manual's strengths and areas of potential improvement.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

How should the Marriage and Family Relations course be used?

This course is designed to help Church members strengthen marriages and families and find joy in their family relationships. The bishopric or branch presidency is responsible to see that the course is implemented effectively.

Because Church members have different needs and come from different family situations, the course is divided into two parts. Part A, “Strengthening Marriages,” is particularly helpful for married couples and for members who are preparing to be married. Part B, “Parents’ Responsibilities to Strengthen Families,” assists parents and grandparents in their efforts to “bring [children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Members who participate in the course should understand that they have the option to attend according to their individual needs. For example, a married couple without children may want to participate in part A but not in part B. A single parent may decide to participate only in the lessons in part B.

Ward and branch leaders may be flexible in their use of the course, according to the promptings of the Spirit and the needs of individual members. They should consider the following ideas:

- Bishoprics and branch presidencies may schedule the course as a Sunday School class. As guided by the Spirit, leaders may invite specific members to attend.
- High priests group leaderships, elders quorum presidencies, and Relief Society presidencies may use individual lessons for instruction on the first Sunday of each month. As appropriate, they may use the lessons for firesides and for teaching opportunities on weeknights or Saturdays.
- Bishoprics and branch presidencies may use individual lessons in combined Melchizedek Priesthood–Relief Society meetings on fifth Sundays. They may also use the lessons in firesides for young men and women.
- Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women advisers may use the manual as a resource for Mutual night. They may use the lessons to teach the young men and women together or in their respective organizations.
- Individuals and couples may study the course on their own.

Who should receive the materials for the course?

Each of the ward or branch members listed below should receive one copy of the *Marriage and Family Relations Instructor’s Manual* and one copy of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*:

Bishop or branch president	Relief Society president
High priests group leader	Young Women president
Elders quorum president	Marriage and Family Relations
Young Men president	course instructor

Each participant in the course should receive a copy of the study guide.

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THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Course

The Marriage and Family Relations course is designed to help Church members strengthen marriages and families and find joy in their family relationships. It is divided into two parts. Part A, “Strengthening Marriages,” is particularly helpful for married couples and for members who are preparing to be married. Part B, “Parents’ Responsibilities to Strengthen Families,” assists parents and grandparents in their efforts to “bring [children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

The course is based on doctrines and principles taught in the scriptures and by latter-day prophets and apostles. It gives special emphasis to “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” which is included on page viii.

Your Responsibilities as a Teacher

As you ponder the eternal importance of marriage and the family and the great need to strengthen marriages and families, you will begin to comprehend the profound importance of your calling to teach this course. Your dedication and prayerful preparation will bring blessings to you and your family as well as to those who participate in the course. As you strive to magnify your calling, remember the principles outlined on this page and on pages x–xi.

Prepare Yourself to Teach

As the instructor for this course, your responsibility is to teach the doctrines of the gospel by the power of the Holy Ghost. You do not need to have professional training in family counseling, nor do you need to be able to find solutions to all the challenges that can occur in families. Class discussions should lead participants to ponder and pray about their own lives and make improvements in their own families.

For help with basic, essential principles of gospel teaching, such as personal preparation, loving those you teach, and teaching by the Spirit, refer to the following resources:

- “Gospel Teaching and Leadership,” section 16 of the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (35209 or 35903).
- *Teaching, No Greater Call* (36123).
- *Teaching Guidebook* (34595).

Remember the Broad Scope of the Course

Before you teach the first lesson, take time to review the entire course. This will help you see how the lessons work together to strengthen marriages and families.

As you prepare for each lesson, it will be helpful to review the table of contents (pages v–vii), which provides an overview of the course. Review what you have

already taught and learned, and ponder how the doctrines and principles in each lesson support the course as a whole.

Begin Lesson Preparation Early

Your preparation will be more successful if you begin early for each lesson. Soon after teaching a lesson, preview the next lesson. If you have an idea of what you will be teaching, you will be able to ponder the lesson throughout the week. This can help you be more aware of principles you should emphasize, methods you can use, and experiences you can share.

Select the Lesson Material That Will Best Meet Participants' Needs

Carefully study the doctrines and principles in each lesson, seeking the guidance of the Spirit to help you select the lesson material that will best meet participants' needs. Remember that "the success of a lesson is measured by its influence on those you teach" (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 103).

Determine How to Teach the Lessons

In addition to determining *what* you are going to teach in a lesson, it is important to decide *how* you will teach it. You should always strive to teach in a way that will encourage participants to apply the doctrines and principles they learn.

The lessons in this course should be given as discussions rather than lectures. Help members participate meaningfully in discussing the doctrines and principles you teach. The Lord's counsel regarding class discussion is found in Doctrine and Covenants 88:122: "Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege." For information about conducting discussions, see pages 63–70 in *Teaching, No Greater Call*.

As appropriate, use a variety of methods to help participants learn and understand the principles in the lessons. For example, look for opportunities to write on the chalkboard, use object lessons, and display pictures. For help on how to use these and other methods, refer to pages 159–84 in *Teaching, No Greater Call*.

Invite Participants to Apply What They Learn

As a gospel teacher, you must not be satisfied with merely sharing information, even if you do so in an original, engaging way. Your purpose is to help others live according to the doctrines and principles they learn. President Harold B. Lee, the 11th President of the Church, counseled:

"All the principles and ordinances of the gospel are in a sense but invitations to learning the gospel by the practice of its teachings. No person knows the principle of tithing until he pays tithing. No one knows the principle of the Word of Wisdom until he keeps the Word of Wisdom. Children, or grownups for that matter, are not converted to tithing, the Word of Wisdom, keeping the Sabbath day holy, or prayer by hearing someone talk about these principles. We learn the gospel by living it. . . .

". . . We never really know anything of the teachings of the gospel until we have experienced the blessings that come from living each principle" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 215).

Church magazines often contain inspiring stories illustrating how members of the Church have been blessed as they have lived the gospel. You can find stories that teach certain doctrines and principles by searching in the indexes of the magazines. Consider sharing some of these stories in class.

At the conclusion of each lesson, invite participants to apply what they have learned. Be sure to leave enough time to extend invitations that will inspire them to take action. Plan ways to extend such invitations. For example, after lesson 9, titled “Children Are an Heritage of the Lord,” you could review the main principles of the lesson and then invite participants to make a commitment to spend time alone with each of their children.

Encourage Participants to Use the Study Guide for the Course

As part of your preparation for each lesson, you should review the corresponding material in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide* (36357). Plan ways to encourage participants to (1) follow at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) read the article or articles that accompany each lesson. Emphasize that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Participants should bring their study guides to class for each lesson.

Respond to the Needs of Those Who Are Not in Traditional Family Situations

Be sensitive to the individual circumstances of participants, some of whom may be unmarried, widowed, divorced, or in other difficult family situations. Keep in mind the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th President of the Church:

“We . . . continue to hold up the ideal of the Latter-day Saint family. The fact that some do not now have the privilege of living in such a family is not reason enough to stop talking about it. We do discuss family life with sensitivity, however, realizing that many . . . do not presently have the privilege of belonging or contributing to such a family. But we cannot set aside this standard, because so many other things depend upon it” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 294–95).

Dealing with Serious Family Problems

While encouraging discussion, make sure participants understand that it is not appropriate to share details of serious family problems. If participants seek counsel about serious difficulties, gently encourage them to speak privately with the bishop. He will be able to counsel them. He may also recommend counselors in LDS Family Services or community resources that provide help that is consistent with Church standards.

Materials You Should Use

The Church has produced sufficient resources to help you teach true doctrines and principles about marriage and the family. Please refrain from using commercially produced materials in your preparation or your teaching. Your primary resources for teaching the course are the scriptures, this manual, and the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Great thought and prayer have gone into the preparation of the materials for this course.

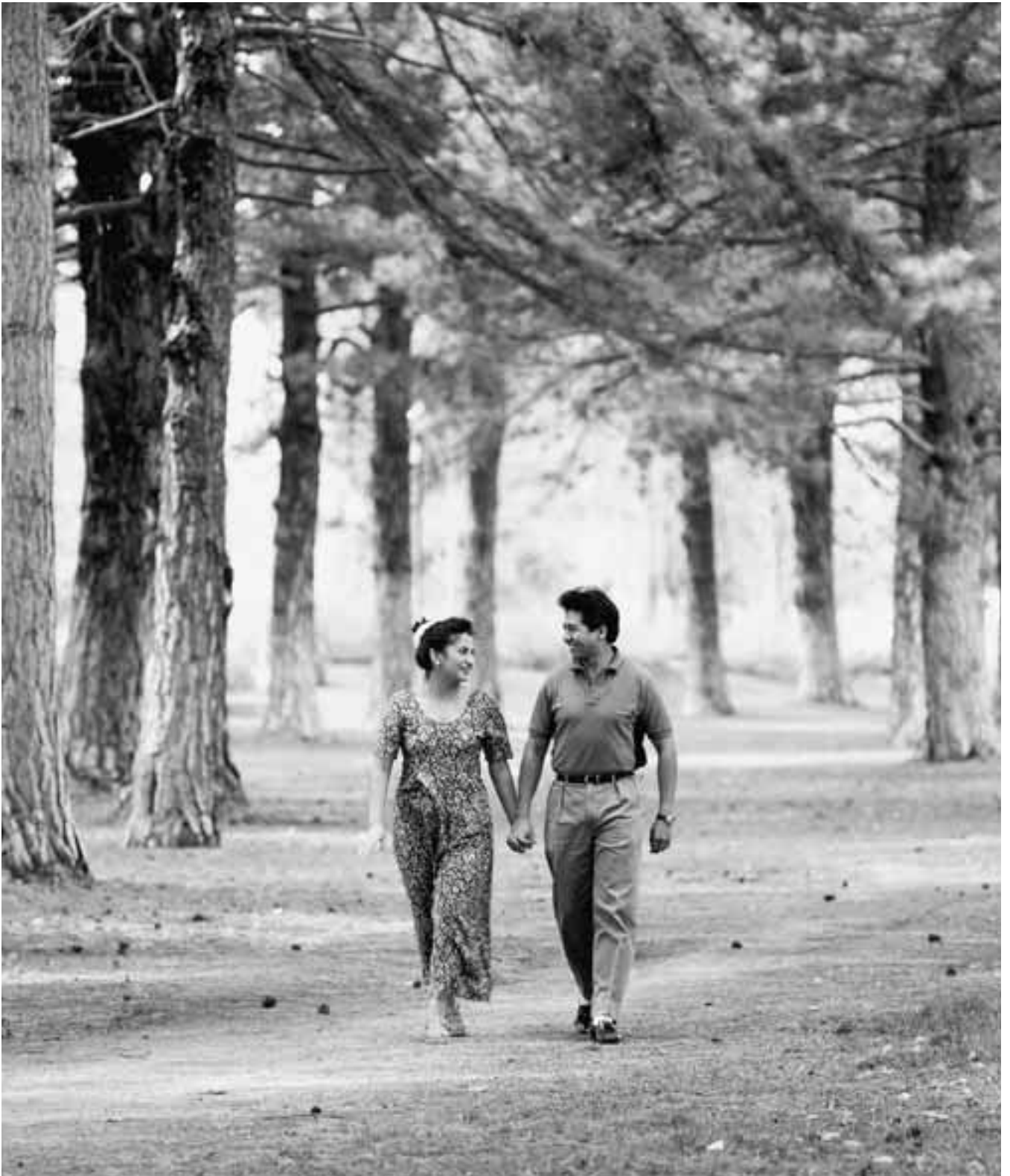
Additional Resources

The following Church-produced resources provide additional information on subjects discussed in this course. These resources are available through Church distribution centers. You may want to encourage participants to use these publications in their families (they are listed on page vi in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*).

- *Family Guidebook* (31180). This guidebook describes the organization of the family, provides information about teaching the gospel in the home, and outlines procedures for priesthood ordinances and blessings.
- Articles about marriage and the family in Church magazines.
- *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106). This book helps parents and children prepare lessons for family home evening (pages 3–160, 173–232). It contains ideas for making family home evening successful (pages 163–70) and includes suggestions for teaching specific principles and responsibilities to children (pages 235–62). It also contains ideas for family activities (pages 265–340).
- *Teaching, No Greater Call* (36123). This resource contains principles and practical suggestions to help Church members improve as gospel teachers. Part D, “Teaching in the Home” (pages 125–48), is particularly helpful for parents.
- *Teaching Guidebook* (34595). This guidebook provides suggestions for improving gospel teaching and learning.
- *For the Strength of Youth* (34285). This pamphlet outlines the Church’s standards for dating, dress and appearance, friendship, honesty, language, media, mental and physical health, music and dancing, sexual purity, Sunday behavior, repentance, worthiness, and service.
- *A Parent's Guide* (31125). This handbook contains suggestions to help parents teach their children about physical intimacy.
- *Guidebook for Parents and Guardians of Handicapped Children* (31123). This guidebook offers counsel for families with children who have disabilities. It also contains information about Church-produced materials to help parents and others teach those with disabilities.
- *Cornerstones of a Happy Home* (33108). This pamphlet contains an address given by President Gordon B. Hinckley while he was serving as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.
- *Being a Righteous Husband and Father* (35402). This pamphlet contains an address given by President Howard W. Hunter, the 14th President of the Church.
- *One for the Money: Guide to Family Finance* (33293). This pamphlet, by Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, provides practical suggestions on managing family finances.

PART A

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES



“THE FAMILY IS CENTRAL TO THE CREATOR’S PLAN”

LESSON

1

Purpose To emphasize the eternal importance of the family and to help participants know what they need to do to receive the full benefit of the Marriage and Family Relations course.

- Preparation**
1. Review the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual). Look for ways to apply these principles in your preparation to teach.
 2. Read the lesson’s bold headings, which outline the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder these doctrines and principles throughout the week, seeking the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
 3. Prayerfully study “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” found on page viii in this manual and page iv in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*.
 4. Obtain a copy of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide* (36357) for each participant. You should receive these copies from the Sunday School presidency, the ward clerk, or the assistant ward clerk assigned to materials.
 5. In advance, ask one or two participants to prepare to talk briefly about how they felt when they were married in the temple. Also ask them to prepare to talk about the joy and blessings they receive in this life because they have been sealed to their spouse for eternity. Seek the guidance of the Spirit as you decide whom you should ask to fulfill this assignment.
 6. Before class, write on the chalkboard the following quotation (from *Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 255):

The most important of the Lord’s work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes.

*President Harold B. Lee
11th President of the Church*

Suggested Lesson Development

Latter-day prophets proclaim the eternal importance of marriage and the family.

Share the following true story:

A man seemed to have lost everything in a disastrous flood. He wept, not for the loss of his worldly goods, but because he could not locate his beloved wife and four children. There was a very real possibility that they had drowned. Soon the word came that they were alive and waiting for him at a nearby emergency facility. What a joyous moment when that family was brought together again!

As they rejoiced, the man said, “I have my family again, and although I stand without one earthly possession left to my name, I feel like a millionaire” (quoted by Robert L. Simpson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 11–12; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 11).

Briefly share your convictions and testimony about marriage and the family. As appropriate, share your feelings about your own family. Then read the following statement by Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“The center core of the Church is not the stake [center]; it is not the chapel. . . . The most sacred place on earth may not be the temple, necessarily. The chapel, the stake [center], and the temple are sacred as they contribute to the building of the most sacred institution in the Church—the home—and to the blessing of the most sacred relationships in the Church, the family” (*That All May Be Edified* [1982], 234–35).

Give each participant a copy of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Have participants turn to page iv. Explain that in 1995, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a proclamation to all the world concerning marriage and the family. Many of the doctrines and principles taught in the proclamation will be discussed during this course. Read the proclamation with participants, inviting different participants to read each paragraph aloud.

- What are some of the doctrines and principles taught in the proclamation on the family? (Consider listing participants' answers on the chalkboard.) Why does the world need this counsel and warning?

President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church, explained: “Why do we have this proclamation on the family now? Because the family is under attack. All across the world families are falling apart. The place to begin to improve society is in the home. Children do, for the most part, what they are taught. We are trying to make the world better by making the family stronger” (“Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 5).

- How have you and your family been strengthened by following the counsel in this proclamation?

Eternal marriage can bring joy and great blessings in this life and throughout eternity.

Emphasize that eternal marriage is central to Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. It allows families to find true joy in this life and to continue and progress throughout eternity.

- What blessings can we receive in this life when we have been married for eternity?

Invite the assigned participants to talk briefly about how they felt when they were married in the temple and about the joy and blessings they receive in this life because they have been sealed to their spouse for eternity (see “Preparation,” item 5).

Consider sharing one or more of the following statements:

President James E. Faust of the First Presidency taught: “Many covenants are indispensable to happiness here and hereafter. Among the most important are

the marriage covenants made between husband and wife. From these covenants flow the greatest joys of life" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 19; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 17).

Elder Boyd K. Packer said that "romance, love, marriage, and parenthood" are "the purest, most beautiful and appealing experiences of life" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 21).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expressed: "The sweet companionship of eternal marriage is one of the greatest blessings God has granted to His children. Certainly, the many years I have shared with my beautiful companion have brought me the deepest joys of my life. From the beginning of time, marital companionship of husband and wife has been fundamental to our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. Our lives are touched for good, and we are both edified and ennobled as we savor the sweet blessings of association with dear members of the family" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 32).

In his first address to the general Church membership as President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "To my beloved wife of fifty-eight years later this month, I express appreciation. . . . How grateful I am for this precious woman who has walked at my side through sunshine and storm. We do not stand as tall as we once did. But there has been no shrinkage in our love one for another" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 93; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 70).

Explain that many people believe that marriage and family life are only mortal experiences. But as members of the Church, we know that a worthy couple can enter the temple and, through a sacred priesthood ordinance, be sealed together as husband and wife for eternity. When a man and woman are married in this way, an eternal family unit begins.

- What eternal blessings are promised to married couples who are sealed by the power of the priesthood and then remain faithful to their covenants? (Read Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; 132:19–24, 30–31 with participants. The following list includes some answers, which could be written on the chalkboard.)
 - a. They will be exalted in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (D&C 131:1–3; 132:20–24).
 - b. They will be together "in time, and through all eternity" (D&C 132:19). Their children may also be part of their eternal family. (Explain that the Holy Spirit of Promise, which is mentioned in D&C 132:19, is the Holy Ghost. According to our faithfulness, the Holy Ghost confirms that the priesthood ordinances we have received and the covenants we have made are acceptable to God.)
 - c. They will "inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers" (D&C 132:19).
 - d. They will continue to have seed, or spirit children, throughout eternity (D&C 132:19, 30–31; see also D&C 131:4).
- How does it help you to know that families can be eternal?

Point out that there are many faithful Latter-day Saints who, through no fault of their own, do not have the opportunity to receive the blessings of eternal marriage

in this life. Emphasize that the Lord has promised that all faithful Saints will eventually receive these blessings. If you feel it is necessary to help participants understand this principle, read the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“We know that many worthy and wonderful Latter-day Saints currently lack the ideal opportunities and essential requirements for their progress. Singleness, childlessness, death, and divorce frustrate ideals and postpone the fulfillment of promised blessings. In addition, some women who desire to be full-time mothers and homemakers have been literally compelled to enter the full-time workforce. But these frustrations are only temporary. The Lord has promised that in the eternities no blessing will be denied his sons and daughters who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right.

“Many of the most important deprivations of mortality will be set right in the Millennium, which is the time for fulfilling all that is incomplete in the great plan of happiness for all of our Father’s worthy children. We know that will be true of temple ordinances. I believe it will also be true of family relationships and experiences” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75).

To address the circumstances of individual participants, it may be helpful to read one or both of the statements in “Additional Resource Material” on page 8.

The Marriage and Family Relations course is designed to help us find joy in our family relationships.

Invite a participant to read the following statement aloud:

President Harold B. Lee, the 11th President of the Church, said, “The most important of the Lord’s work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, 255).

- In what ways would the world be different if everyone lived according to this simple declaration?

Explain that this course is designed to help us strengthen marriages and families and find joy in our family relationships. The lessons are based on doctrines and principles taught in the scriptures and by latter-day prophets.

Point out that by choosing to participate in this course, members have demonstrated a desire to strengthen their families. There are three things they must do to receive the full benefit of this course:

1. Participate in class.

Point out that all who participate in the course can learn from each other, regardless of their experience with marriage or raising children. Invite participants to testify of the truths they discuss and to share experiences that relate appropriately to the lessons.

2. Use the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*.

Have participants open their copies of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Point out that for each lesson, the guide contains “Ideas for Application,” which are suggestions to help participants apply the doctrines and principles they have learned. In addition, each lesson is

accompanied by one or two articles by General Authorities of the Church. After each lesson, participants should complete at least one of the suggested activities and study each article. Married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles together.

Refer to pages 3–7 in the study guide. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in "Ideas for Application" and (2) studying the article "For Time and All Eternity," by Elder Boyd K. Packer.

Encourage participants to bring their study guides to class for each lesson.

3. Strive to live according to the doctrines and principles in the lessons.

Emphasize that it is not enough to merely learn the gospel. For the gospel to be effective in our lives, we must live what we learn. President Harold B. Lee stated, "We never really know anything of the teachings of the gospel until we have experienced the blessings that come from living each principle" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, 215).

Our homes can be "a bit of heaven" as we build "upon the rock of our Redeemer."

Emphasize that in today's world, the home is one of the only places where we can find peace. Then read the following statement by President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency:

"If we really try, our home can be a bit of heaven here on earth. The thoughts we think, the deeds we do, the lives we live influence not only the success of our earthly journey; they mark the way to our eternal goals" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 80–81; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 69).

- In what ways can home be "a bit of heaven"?

After participants have responded to this question, share your own convictions about how home can be a bit of heaven. As appropriate, share one or two personal experiences as part of your testimony.

Share the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th President of the Church:

"Many of the social restraints which in the past have helped to reinforce and to shore up the family are dissolving and disappearing. The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 4).

Read Helaman 5:12 with participants. Then read the following statement by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

"If you build your homes on the foundation rock of our Redeemer and the gospel, they can be sanctuaries where your families can be sheltered from the raging storms of life" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 88; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 71).

- What does it mean to you to build your home "on the foundation rock of our Redeemer"? What are some specific things families will do if they have Christ-centered homes?

Emphasize that this course discusses principles to help strengthen marriages and families. We should apply these principles so we can draw nearer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in our homes. We must never lose sight of the Savior's infinite Atonement, which makes it possible for us to dwell with our families forever.

Conclusion

Express your enthusiasm about this course, and let participants know what they can expect from you as the teacher. For example, you could assure them that you will prepare yourself spiritually to teach and that you will join them in applying the principles in each lesson and using the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage those you teach to make a commitment to participate in class, use the study guide, and apply the doctrines and principles they learn.

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the great importance of the family. Express gratitude for the knowledge that your family can be eternal.

Additional

Resource Material

Statements to address the needs of those who are not in traditional family situations

To address the circumstances of participants who are not in traditional family situations, read one or both of the following statements:

President Ezra Taft Benson, the 13th President of the Church, told the single sisters of the Church: "We see you as a vital part of the mainstream body of the Church. We pray that the emphasis we naturally place on families will not make you feel less needed or less valuable to the Lord or to His Church. The sacred bonds of Church membership go far beyond marital status, age, or present circumstance. Your individual worth as a daughter of God transcends all" ("To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 96).

President Joseph Fielding Smith, the 10th President of the Church, taught: "If a man or a woman who has been sealed in the temple for time and eternity should sin and lose the right to receive the exaltation in the celestial kingdom, he or she could not retard the progress of the injured companion who had been faithful. Everyone will be judged according to his [own] works, and there would be no justice in condemning the innocent for the sins of the guilty" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:177).

DEVELOPING UNITY IN MARRIAGE

LESSON

2

Purpose To help married couples be more unified and to help single members prepare to enjoy unity in marriage.

Preparation

1. As you prepare yourself to teach, look for ways to follow the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings. These headings give an overview of the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder ways to help participants apply these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. If the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106) is available, study “Achieving Oneness in Marriage” on pages 239–40. Consider referring to the article during the lesson.
4. Bring to class a piece of paper and a pen or pencil for each participant.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

The Lord has commanded husbands and wives to be one.

To begin the lesson, write on the chalkboard $1+1=1$.

- How does this describe the marriage relationship?

After participants have discussed this question, read Genesis 2:24 with them. Emphasize that God has commanded husbands and wives to be one.

- What does it mean for a husband and wife to be one?

Have participants read the following statement by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (page 8 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“At the creation of man and woman, unity for them in marriage was not given as hope; it was a command! ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh’ (Genesis 2:24). Our Heavenly Father wants our hearts to be knit together. That union in love is not simply an ideal. It is a necessity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 85; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 66).

Explain that this lesson discusses several ways in which husbands and wives can be unified.

Husbands and wives are to value each other as equal partners.

Explain that an important principle of unity in marriage is that husbands and wives should value each other as equal partners. While serving as First Counselor in the First Presidency, President Gordon B. Hinckley said:

“Marriage, in its truest sense, is a partnership of equals, with neither exercising dominion over the other, but, rather, with each encouraging and assisting the other in whatever responsibilities and aspirations he or she might have” (“I Believe,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1992, 6).

- Why must husbands and wives value one another as equal partners to be one?
- What are some attitudes or customs that keep husbands and wives from being equal partners in their marriage? What can husbands and wives do to overcome such challenges?

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“It was not meant that the woman alone accommodate herself to the priesthood duties of her husband or her sons. She is of course to sustain and support and encourage them.

“Holders of the priesthood, in turn, must accommodate themselves to the needs and responsibilities of the wife and mother. Her physical and emotional and intellectual and cultural well-being and her spiritual development must stand first among [their] priesthood duties.

“There is no task, however menial, connected with the care of babies, the nurturing of children, or with the maintenance of the home that is not [a husband’s] equal obligation” (“A Tribute to Women,” *Ensign*, July 1989, 75).

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled priesthood holders: “As a husband and worthy priesthood bearer, you will want to emulate the example of the Savior, whose priesthood you hold. You will make giving of self to wife and children a primary focus of your life. Occasionally a man attempts to control the destiny of each family member. He makes all the decisions. His wife is subjected to his personal whims. Whether that is the custom or not is immaterial. It is not the way of the Lord. It is not the way a Latter-day Saint husband treats his wife and family” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 26).

- What are some things husbands and wives do when they value each other as equal partners? (Consider summarizing participants’ answers on the chalkboard. As needed, share the ideas listed below and invite participants to share experiences that relate to those ideas.)
 - a. They share responsibility for ensuring that the family prays together, conducts family home evening, and studies the scriptures together.
 - b. They work together in planning how family finances are used.
 - c. They consult together and come to agreement on household rules and how to discipline children. The children see that their parents are unified in such decisions.
 - d. They plan family activities together.
 - e. They both help with housekeeping responsibilities.
 - f. They attend church together.

Husbands and wives should allow their individual characteristics and abilities to complement one another.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:11 with participants. Then share the following statement by Elder Richard G. Scott:

“In the Lord’s plan, it takes two—a man and a woman—to form a whole. . . . For the greatest happiness and productivity in life, both husband and wife are needed. Their efforts interlock and are complementary. Each has individual traits that best fit the role the Lord has defined for happiness as a man or woman. When used as the Lord intends, those capacities allow a married couple to think, act, and rejoice as one—to face challenges together and overcome them as one, to grow in love and understanding, and through temple ordinances to be bound together as one whole, eternally. That is the plan” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 73–74).

To illustrate the principle taught by Elder Scott, conduct the following exercise:

Give each participant a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask each participant who is married to list some of his or her characteristics and abilities and some of the characteristics and abilities of his or her spouse. Ask each participant who is single to think of a married couple and list some characteristics and abilities of the husband and wife. After participants have had a few minutes to write, ask the following questions:

- In what ways can the characteristics and abilities that you have listed help married couples be unified? (Ask participants to share specific examples.)
- In what ways have you seen differences between husbands and wives become strengths in their relationship?

Read the following statement by Sister Marjorie P. Hinckley, wife of President Gordon B. Hinckley, about her first year of marriage:

“We loved each other; there was no doubt about that, but we also had to get used to each other. I think every couple has to get used to each other. Early on I realized it would be better if we worked harder to get used to each other than constantly try to change each other” (*Church News*, 26 Sept. 1998, 4).

- In what ways might the results be different when couples try to “get used to each other” rather than “constantly try to change each other”?

Husbands and wives must be loyal to one another.

Share the following counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church:

“Determine that there will never be anything that will come between you that will disrupt your marriage. Make it work. Resolve to make it work. There is far too much of divorce, wherein hearts are broken and sometimes lives are destroyed. Be fiercely loyal one to another” (“Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 2, 4).

- What does the word *loyal* mean to you? (Answers may include being faithful, true, and trustworthy in a relationship.)

Explain that the Lord emphasized the need for husbands and wives to be loyal to one another. Read Doctrine and Covenants 42:22 with participants. Point out that this commandment applies equally to husbands and wives.

- What does it mean to cleave to a husband or wife and none else?

President Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th President of the Church, taught:

“The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes preeminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life

nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 143).

- How can a person keep social, occupational, and Church commitments from interfering with loyalty to his or her spouse?
- What are some specific ways in which couples can show loyalty to one another? (If participants have difficulty answering this question, share a few examples, such as those listed below.)
 - a. A husband can reschedule work, recreation, or other appointments to celebrate his wife's birthday.
 - b. A wife can pray daily for the success of her husband in his activities.
 - c. They can listen to each other, even when doing so may not be convenient.
 - d. They can speak lovingly and respectfully about each other in conversations with family members and friends.

Conclusion

Emphasize that the Lord and His prophets have commanded husbands and wives to be unified in love and to work together as equal partners. Husbands and wives can show their loyalty to each other every day through their thoughts, words, and actions.

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 8–11 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in "Ideas for Application" and (2) reading the article "That We May Be One," by Elder Henry B. Eyring. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Remind participants to bring their study guides to class for the next lesson.

NURTURING LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE

LESSON 3

Purpose To help participants better understand the principle of love and to encourage those who are married to nurture the love in their marriages.

Preparation

1. Consider ways you can apply the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Ponder the doctrines and principles outlined in the lesson’s bold headings. Throughout the week, think about ways to teach these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. If the following items are available, prepare to use them as part of the lesson:
 - a. One or more wedding pictures. For example, you could display the picture *Young Couple Going to the Temple* (62559; Gospel Art Picture Kit 609) or you could bring pictures from your wedding and ask participants to bring their own wedding pictures.
 - b. A flower or a picture of a flower.

Suggested Lesson Development

Husbands and wives need to nurture their love for one another.

Display one or more wedding pictures (see “Preparation,” item 3a). Comment on the love that husbands and wives feel for each other when they are first married.

Display a flower or a picture of a flower (see “Preparation,” item 3b). Then have a participant read the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th President of the Church (page 14 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding. The mortal body would soon be emaciated and die if there were not frequent feedings. The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 5).

Explain that this lesson is about how husbands and wives can nurture their love for one another so it will continue to grow.

Expressions of affection and kindness keep love and friendship alive in marriage.

Ask participants who are married to think back to the time when they were newlyweds. Invite them to tell about some things they did for their spouses at that time in their lives.

- Why are such actions necessary throughout marriage?

Explain that a husband and wife must continue to court one another and nurture their friendship throughout their lives. As they do this, they will find that their love for each other grows stronger.

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy observed: “Friendship is . . . a vital and wonderful part of courtship and marriage. A relationship between a man and a woman that begins with friendship and then ripens into romance and eventually marriage will usually become an enduring, eternal friendship. Nothing is more inspiring in today’s world of easily dissolved marriages than to observe a husband and wife quietly appreciating and enjoying each other’s friendship year in and year out as they experience together the blessings and trials of mortality” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 81; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 64).

While serving in the Seventy, Elder James E. Faust said that one of the less obvious but more significant reasons for divorce is “the lack of a constant enrichment in marriage, . . . an absence of that something extra which makes it precious, special, and wonderful, when it is also drudgery, difficult, and dull.” He counseled: “In the enriching of marriage the big things are the little things. It is a constant appreciation for each other and a thoughtful demonstration of gratitude. It is the encouraging and the helping of each other to grow. Marriage is a joint quest for the good, the beautiful, and the divine” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 13–14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 10–11).

- What are some “little things” that can keep love and friendship alive in marriage? (Consider listing participants’ responses on the chalkboard.) What experiences or examples can you share that show the importance of keeping love growing in these ways?

One woman, married for over 35 years, said: “I love it when my husband still brings me little surprises after he has been gone for an evening or a weekend. It doesn’t have to be a big thing, just a cookie or flower he saved from the meeting. I especially love it when he calls me from work in the middle of the day just to ask how my day is going or to share some exciting bit of news. These little things help me feel loved and cherished.”

Point out that husbands and wives need to plan time to be alone together. Have participants read the following counsel from Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Seventy (page 19 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“Keep your courtship alive. Make time to do things together—just the two of you. As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 65).

- What can get in the way of husbands and wives taking time to do things together? How can married couples make time to keep their courtship alive?

Proper intimacy in marriage is an expression of love.

Explain that the proper expression of physical intimacy in marriage is approved by the Lord. It brings great blessings to a married couple, helping them unify their souls and strengthen their love for each other. Consider sharing some or all of the following statements:

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the purposes of physical intimacy in marriage: “Within the enduring covenant of marriage, the Lord permits husband and wife the expression of the sacred procreative powers in all their loveliness and beauty within the bounds He has set. One purpose of this private, sacred, intimate experience is to provide the physical bodies for the spirits Father in Heaven wants to experience mortality. Another reason for these powerful and beautiful feelings of love is to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration of each other, and common purpose” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 38).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children. Its use was mandated in the first commandment [given to Adam and Eve], but another important commandment was given to forbid its misuse. The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God’s plan. The expression of our procreative powers is pleasing to God, but he has commanded that this be confined within the relationship of marriage” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 99; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 74).

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “In the context of lawful marriage, the intimacy of sexual relations is right and divinely approved. There is nothing unholy or degrading about sexuality in itself, for by that means men and women join in a process of creation and in an expression of love” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 311).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Human intimacy is reserved for a married couple because it is the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God. From the Garden of Eden onward, marriage was intended to mean the complete merger of a man and a woman—their hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything. Adam said of Eve that she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and that they were to be ‘one flesh’ in their life together [see Genesis 2:23–24]. This is a union of such completeness that we use the word *seal* to convey its eternal promise. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could render such a sacred bond as being ‘welded’ one to another [see D&C 128:18]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 100; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 76).

President Howard W. Hunter, the 14th President of the Church, counseled that even within the relationship of marriage, the sacred procreative powers must not be misused: “Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other’s needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

Read Exodus 20:14, 17 with participants. Then share the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church:

“We believe in chastity before marriage and total fidelity after marriage. That sums it up. That is the way to happiness in living. That is the way to satisfaction. It brings peace to the heart and peace to the home” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 49).

Emphasize that husbands and wives should be careful not to do anything that even approaches infidelity. For example, they must always maintain appropriate emotional and physical boundaries between themselves and coworkers of the opposite sex.

- Why is complete fidelity in a marriage relationship vitally important?
- How is viewing unwholesome or pornographic material a betrayal of trust in a marriage? In what ways does flirting with a member of the opposite sex harm a marriage?

Share one or both of the following statements:

President Howard W. Hunter advised: “Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one’s character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Ezra Taft Benson, the 13th President of the Church, counseled: “If you are married, avoid flirtations of any kind. . . . What may appear to be harmless teasing or simply having a little fun with someone of the opposite sex can easily lead to more serious involvement and eventual infidelity. A good question to ask ourselves is this: Would my spouse be pleased if he or she knew I was doing this? Would a wife be pleased to know that her husband lunches alone with his secretary? Would a husband be pleased if he saw his wife flirting and being coy with another man? My beloved brothers and sisters, this is what Paul meant when he said: ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil’ (1 Thessalonians 5:22)” (“The Law of Chastity,” in *Brigham Young University 1987–88 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [1988], 52).

Married couples should strive to have charity, the pure love of Christ.

- Read John 13:34–35 and Ephesians 5:25 with participants. What do these passages teach about how husbands and wives should treat one another?

Emphasize that although a married couple’s physical relationship is important, it is not the most important aspect of their love. Share the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball:

“[Love in marriage] is deep, inclusive, comprehensive. It is not like that association of the world which is misnamed love, but which is mostly physical attraction. When marriage is based on this only, the parties soon tire of one another. . . . The love of which the Lord speaks is not only physical attraction, but spiritual attraction as well. It is faith and confidence in, and understanding of, one another. It is a total partnership. It is companionship with common ideals and standards. It is unselfishness toward and sacrifice for one another. It is cleanliness of thought and action and faith in God and his program. It is parenthood in mortality ever looking toward godhood and creation, and parenthood of spirits. It is vast, all-inclusive, and limitless. This kind of love never tires or wanes. It lives on through sickness and sorrow, through prosperity and privation, through accomplishment and disappointment, through time and eternity” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 130–31).

Explain that the love President Kimball spoke of is charity, the pure love of Christ. Read Moroni 7:45–48 with participants. Ask participants to identify

characteristics of charity as they read. Write these characteristics on the chalkboard as shown below:

Charity:

Suffereth long.
Is kind.
Envieth not.
Is not puffed up (proud).
Seeketh not her own.
Is not easily provoked.
Thinketh no evil.
Rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth.
Beareth all things.
Believeth all things.
Hopeth all things.
Endureth all things.
Never faileth.
Is the greatest of all.
Is the pure love of Christ.
Endureth forever.

Point out that other than the commitment to love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and come unto them, the commitment of marriage—especially eternal marriage—is the most important commitment we ever make. Husbands and wives must work continually to develop charity toward one another.

To help participants apply this principle, direct their attention to the characteristics of charity that you have written on the chalkboard. Invite them to discuss ways in which specific characteristics, such as “seeketh not her own” or “never faileth,” may be expressed in the marriage relationship. Ask them to share examples they have seen of some of these characteristics.

Conclusion

Emphasize that husbands and wives must nurture their love and friendship. They need to keep their love alive by continuing to do little things that show affection and kindness. They should be sensitive to each other’s spiritual, physical, and emotional needs as they share the joys and burdens of life together. They must resolve never to do anything to destroy the love that is essential in a marriage relationship. And they should “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [they] may be filled with [charity]” (Moroni 7:48). As marriage partners continue to have a total commitment to each other, their love for each other will increase over the years. They will find that they are developing love that is truly Christlike.

Refer to pages 12–15 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Oneness in Marriage,” by President Spencer W. Kimball. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES IN MARRIAGE

Purpose

To help participants learn that husbands and wives must work together to face challenges and that they can choose to respond with patience and love rather than frustration or anger.

Preparation

1. Review the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual). Look for ways to apply these principles in your preparation to teach.
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings, which outline the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder these doctrines and principles throughout the week, seeking the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. Study the scripture passages on page 19 so you will be ready to conduct a discussion about them.
4. If the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106) is available, study “Resolving Conflicts in Marriage” on pages 240–41. Consider referring to this article during the lesson.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

All married couples will experience challenges.

Share the following story told by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy:

“[A] bride sighed blissfully on her wedding day, ‘Mom, I’m at the end of all my troubles!’ ‘Yes,’ replied her mother, ‘but at which end?’ (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 34; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 26).

- What are some troubles or difficulties that can come to a married couple? (Consider writing participants’ answers on the chalkboard. Answers may include those listed below.)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Disagreements b. Selfishness c. Hurt feelings d. Bad health e. Childlessness f. Aging g. Family members with disabilities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> h. Trying to find fulfillment when all the children have moved away from home i. Death of loved ones j. Financial problems k. Wayward children l. Natural disasters
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Point out that some challenges come as a result of difficulties in the marriage relationship. Others come as a natural part of life.

Husbands and wives can work through any challenge if they view marriage as a covenant relationship.

Explain that married couples will respond to challenges differently depending on how they view their marriage relationship. Write on the chalkboard the words *contract* and *covenant*.

Explain that a contract is a written agreement between two people or groups of people. It is enforceable by the laws of the land. A covenant is similar to a contract but is more far-reaching. The word *covenant* sometimes refers to an agreement between persons, but in the context of the gospel it refers to an agreement between us and the Lord. In a covenant, the Lord sets the terms and we promise to keep them (see Bible Dictionary, “Covenant,” 651). When we keep our promises, the Lord is bound to fulfill His promises (see D&C 82:10).

Point out that many people in today’s society see marriage as nothing more than a contract. Ask participants to think about the following questions without answering aloud:

- When troubles come to a marriage, what might the husband and wife do if they view their relationship as a contract? What will they do if they view their relationship as a covenant?

Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy observed: “When troubles come, the parties to a *contractual* marriage seek happiness by walking away. They marry to obtain benefits and will stay only as long as they’re receiving what they bargained for. But when troubles come to a *covenant* marriage, the husband and wife work them through. . . . *Contract* companions each give 50 percent; *covenant* companions each give 100 percent. Marriage is by nature a covenant, not just a private contract one may cancel at will” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 34; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 26).

When challenges arise, we can choose to respond with patience and love rather than frustration or anger.

Point out that although husbands and wives cannot avoid some challenges, they can choose how they respond to challenges. Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy explained: “No one makes us mad. Others don’t make us angry. There is no force involved. Becoming angry is a conscious choice, a decision; therefore, we can make the choice not to become angry. *We choose!*” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 105; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 80).

Emphasize that Heavenly Father has given us agency—the power to choose and act for ourselves. We can exercise our agency by choosing to be patient and loving when challenges come.

Have participants take turns reading the following scriptures aloud. As they read, encourage them to discuss ways these scriptures can apply to husbands and wives as they respond to the challenges of marriage and everyday life.

Mosiah 18:21	2 Nephi 31:20
1 John 4:18	Doctrine and Covenants 24:8
1 Peter 4:8 (see the Joseph Smith Translation in footnote 8a)	Alma 38:12
John 13:34–35	3 Nephi 11:29–30
John 16:33	James 1:19–20
	Mosiah 3:19

- When we feel that we are becoming frustrated or angry, what can we do to overcome these feelings? (Answers may include those listed below.)
 - a. Remove ourselves from the situation until we have calmed down.
 - b. Pray for help and guidance.
 - c. In a disagreement, take time to consider the other person's motivations and feelings.
 - d. Seek help from local Church leaders and, as necessary, professional counselors whose views and practices are consistent with the teachings of the Church.

To illustrate that husbands and wives can choose how they respond to challenges, read the following story. Explain that it is an example of the little, everyday challenges that can occur in a marriage.

"It was one of those days. No matter how fast she ran during the day, Della was not able to keep up with the demands of her family. Her neighbor, with even more children than she, seemed so cheerful that Della began to doubt her own ability as a woman, a wife, and a mother.

"Ben felt hungrier than usual on his way home. An extra eighty miles to deliver farm equipment had been necessary, but now he was tired. Being home sounded better all the time. Peace. Food. Rest.

"Della heard Ben's car in the driveway and glanced at the clock. Oh no! Almost 7:00 P.M.? Now what? She had wanted to have dinner ready, but . . .

"She heard the door open as she hurriedly placed the last biscuit on the baking sheet.

"Ben strode through the door, leaned around the corner, and smiled at Della. She looked tense, and he noticed the empty table. He paused and took a deep breath."

Ask participants the following questions:

- If Ben's concern is only for himself, what might happen?
- If Ben's concern is for his wife, how might he respond?

After discussing the questions, continue with the story:

"Ben exhaled, smiled at Della, and said, 'Looks as if I got here just in time to help.' Her tension disappeared. Relieved, she kissed him and said, 'It's good to have you home, Ben. You've had a long day, and I wanted to have dinner ready for you!' She gestured toward the empty table.

"'We'll finish it together,' he said, placing his arm around her. They then began to share the different challenges each had faced. While Ben set the table, Della put the biscuits in the oven and told him how rushed she had felt—even overwhelmed—all day. Ben forgot about how hungry he was and thought about ways to make her days easier" (*Family Home Evening Resource Book* [1983], 241; paraphrasing altered).

Conclusion

Refer to pages 16–17 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this

lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Agency and Anger,” by Elder Lynn G. Robbins. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Additional

Resource Material

Spouse abuse, an offense to God

Explain that when husbands and wives are angry or frustrated, they sometimes allow their behavior to become abusive and destructive. Spouses should never abuse one another in any way. Abuse violates the commandments of God and the emphatic statements of Church leaders. President George Albert Smith, the eighth President of the Church, declared: “Nobody ever abused anybody else when he had the spirit of the Lord. It is always when we have some other spirit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, 8).

Briefly share the following information:

Spouse abuse can be emotional, physical, or sexual.

Emotional abuse includes actions such as yelling, cursing, making insulting or demeaning remarks, acting in a dictatorial way, humiliating a spouse before children or others, withholding support or affection as punishment, and ignoring or minimizing a spouse’s feelings.

Physical abuse includes pushing, restraining, shaking, hitting, slapping, coercing, and withholding resources.

Sexual abuse may be either emotional or physical. It includes sexual harassment, inflicting pain, using force or intimidation, and persisting in doing things during times of intimacy that are unpleasant or displeasing to the other.

Explain that if participants have further questions about what constitutes abuse, they should seek counsel from their bishop.

Share the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church. Point out that although President Hinckley gave this warning about men who abuse their wives, it is also applicable to women. Ask participants to silently evaluate their own behavior as they listen to this counsel:

“Some [men] put on a fine face before the world during the day and come home in the evening, set aside their self-discipline, and on the slightest provocation fly into outbursts of anger.

“No man who engages in such evil and unbecoming behavior is worthy of the priesthood of God. No man who so conducts himself is worthy of the privileges of the house of the Lord. I regret that there are some men undeserving of the love of their wives and children. There are children who fear their fathers, and wives who fear their husbands. If there be any such men within the hearing of my voice, as a servant of the Lord I rebuke you and call you to repentance. Discipline yourselves. Master your temper. Most of the things that make you angry are of very small consequence. And what a terrible price you are paying for your anger. Ask the Lord to forgive you. Ask your wife to forgive you. Apologize to your children” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 91–92; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 68).

Explain that some people develop aspects of abusive behavior without recognizing it. Others recognize that their behavior needs to be changed but feel unable to make the changes without help.

Those who want help in understanding and changing their abusive behavior can change as they humbly seek the Lord's help and guidance. They may turn to their bishop, who will be able to counsel them. He may also recommend counselors in LDS Family Services or community resources that provide help that is consistent with Church standards.

- In what ways can spouse abuse affect a couple's children?

In addition to asking for participants' responses, point out that spouse abuse sets a lasting example of trying to resolve difficulties in destructive ways. People who have witnessed such abuse as children often mistreat others and continue that pattern when they are married.

- How are children influenced when they see their parents resolve difficulties with kindness and patience?

Explain that mothers and fathers who are loving and mature when they face challenges teach their children good habits that can last a lifetime. While serving as Presiding Bishop, Bishop Robert D. Hales said: "It helps children to see that good parents can have differing opinions and that these differences can be worked out without striking, yelling, or throwing things. They need to see and feel calm communication with respect for each other's viewpoints so they themselves will know how to work through differences in their own lives" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 9).

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES THROUGH POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

LESSON 5

Purpose To teach participants how to prevent and resolve difficulties in marriage through loving communication.

Preparation

1. As you prepare yourself to teach, look for ways to follow the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings. These headings give an overview of the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder ways to help participants apply these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Every married couple will have some differences of opinion.

Have participants read the following statement by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Seventy (page 20 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“Occasionally we hear something like, ‘Why, we have been married for fifty years, and we have never had a difference of opinion.’ If that is literally the case, then one of the partners is overly dominated by the other or, as someone said, is a stranger to the truth. Any intelligent couple will have differences of opinion. Our challenge is to be sure that we know how to resolve them. That is part of the process of making a good marriage better” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 65).

Explain that this lesson discusses specific principles that can help a husband and wife prevent and resolve difficulties in their relationship.

Husbands and wives should look for the admirable qualities in one another.

Point out that when husbands and wives look for the admirable qualities in one another, they are better able to prevent difficulties. They are also able to work together to resolve difficulties that arise. Share the following story:

One woman repeatedly went to her bishop to express grievances against her husband. Finally the bishop asked her, “Why did you marry this man you consider so insensitive and intolerable?” The woman thought for a moment and said, “Well, I suppose he had some good qualities, but I can’t remember any. He must have changed.” The bishop asked her to go home and pray that her heart would be softened so that she would begin to remember the characteristics that she had once admired in her husband. She found that, with time, she was able to recognize and focus on her husband’s admirable qualities. Before, she had been so consumed with seeing his faults that she had failed to see his good qualities.

- In what ways have you seen the value of looking for the admirable qualities in others? How can looking for the admirable qualities in one another help husbands and wives strengthen their marriage?

Remind participants that although each person is unique, we are all children of God. Invite a participant to read the following statement from “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (page viii in this manual and page iv in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“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.”

- How can remembering this truth help husbands and wives in their efforts to understand one another?

Explain that as husbands and wives seek to see all that is beautiful and divine in one another, they find more joy in one another’s companionship and are better able to help each other fulfill their divine potential.

While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley spoke of “the kind of respect that regards one’s companion as the most precious friend on earth.” He said: “Companionship in marriage is prone to become commonplace and even dull. I know of no more certain way to keep it on a lofty and inspiring plane than for a man occasionally to reflect upon the fact that the helpmeet who stands at his side is a daughter of God, engaged with [God] in the great creative process of bringing to pass His eternal purposes. I know of no more effective way for a woman to keep ever radiant the love for her husband than for her to look for and emphasize the godly qualities that are a part of every son of our Father and that can be evoked when there is respect and admiration and encouragement. The very processes of such actions will cultivate a constantly rewarding appreciation for one another” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 81–82; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 71–72).

Positive communication helps prevent and resolve difficulties.

Explain that in addition to recognizing the admirable qualities in each other, husbands and wives should strive to communicate well with each other. Communication is essential in building love and unity and in resolving difficulties that may arise.

Write the following principles on the chalkboard:

Listen to each other.
 Discuss challenges openly and calmly.
 Communicate in loving, positive ways.

Explain that these principles can help married couples improve their communication. Use the following material to conduct a discussion about each of the principles:

Listen to each other.

Share the following counsel from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Husbands and wives, learn to listen, and listen to learn from one another. . . . Taking time to talk is essential to keep lines of communication intact. If marriage is a prime relationship in life, it deserves prime time! Yet less important appointments are often given priority, leaving only leftover moments for listening to precious partners” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 28; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 23).

- What benefits can come to a husband and wife when they listen carefully and lovingly to each other? (Answers may include those listed below.)
 - a. They learn more about each other’s true feelings and motivations.
 - b. They seek to understand before making judgments or offering advice.
 - c. Each person is more likely to feel valued and loved.
 - d. Each person is less likely to be defensive and more likely to communicate openly.
- What can get in the way of couples really listening to each other? (Answers may include busy schedules, failure to take time to listen, and lack of interest in each other’s responsibilities.)
- What can marriage partners do to become better listeners? (In addition to asking for participants’ ideas, consider sharing those listed below.)
 - a. Take time to talk together. Eliminate distractions, giving all attention to one another.
 - b. Listen to understand. Do not interrupt the person who is talking. If necessary, ask questions such as “Can you tell me more about that?” or “How did you feel when that happened?” or “I’m not sure I understand. Are you saying that . . . ?”
 - c. Avoid getting angry or offended. Remember that in many cases, more than one opinion can be right.

Discuss challenges openly and calmly.

- Why is it important that spouses talk openly to each other about the challenges they face in their marriage?

Point out that discussions about challenges should be conducted in a respectful way, without loud arguments or contention. While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley taught:

“We seldom get into trouble when we speak softly. It is only when we raise our voices that the sparks fly and tiny molehills become great mountains of contention. . . . The voice of heaven is a still small voice; likewise, the voice of domestic peace is a quiet voice” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 82; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 72).

President David O. McKay said, “Let husband or wife never speak in loud tones to each other, ‘Unless the house is on fire’” (*Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay [1971], 294).

Communicate in loving, positive ways.

- In what ways do expressions of appreciation, support, and affection influence a marriage? How does negative communication—such as criticism, nagging, and fault-finding—affect a marriage?

Have participants read the following counsel from Elder Joe J. Christensen (page 19 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*):

“Avoid ‘ceaseless pinpricking.’ Don’t be too critical of each other’s faults. Recognize that none of us is perfect. We all have a long way to go to become as Christlike as our leaders have urged us to become.

“ ‘Ceaseless pinpricking,’ as President Spencer W. Kimball called it, can deflate almost any marriage. . . . Generally each of us is painfully aware of our weaknesses, and we don’t need frequent reminders. Few people have ever changed for the better as a result of constant criticism or nagging. If we are not careful, some of what we offer as *constructive* criticism is actually *destructive*” (see Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 85; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 64–65; see also Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage and Divorce,” *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [1977], 148).

- What can result from constant complaints or criticism?
- One form of criticizing is the practice of comparing a person’s weaknesses to the strengths of others. How can this practice affect a marriage?
- What experiences have you had that show the value of complimenting and encouraging others rather than constantly criticizing them? In what ways can positive expressions strengthen marriages?

One woman explained that her husband often compliments her on her talents as a wife and homemaker, not only when they are at home but also when they are with friends. He never mentions her weaknesses. Instead, he chooses to focus on her strengths. She said that his comments give her hope and motivation to improve.

Conclusion

Share the following counsel from Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“In family discussions, differences should not be ignored, but should be weighed and evaluated calmly. One’s point or opinion usually is not as important as a healthy, continuing relationship. Courtesy and respect in listening and responding during discussions are basic in proper dialogue. . . . How important it is to know how to disagree with another’s point of view without being disagreeable” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 79; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 52).

Briefly review the principles you have discussed. Encourage participants to apply these principles in their lives. Bear your testimony as prompted by the Spirit.

Refer to pages 18–20 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Marriage and the Great Plan of Happiness,” by Elder Joe J. Christensen. Emphasize that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES THROUGH FAITH AND PRAYER

LESSON

6

Purpose To help participants understand and work to receive the blessings that come when married couples exercise faith in Jesus Christ and pray together.

Preparation

1. Review the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual). Look for ways to apply these principles in your preparation to teach.
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings, which outline the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder these doctrines and principles throughout the week, seeking the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Husbands and wives should work together to increase their faith in Jesus Christ.

Share the following story related by President James E. Faust of the First Presidency:

“Elder Orin Voorheis . . . is a big, handsome, splendid young man who served in the Argentina Buenos Aires South Mission. One night, about 11 months into his mission, some armed robbers accosted Elder Voorheis and his companion. In a senseless act of violence, one of them shot Elder Voorheis in the head. . . .

“Elder Voorheis is still almost completely paralyzed and unable to speak, but he has a wonderful spirit and can respond to questions with hand movements. He still wears his missionary badge. His parents do not ask, ‘Why did this happen to our noble son, who was serving at the call of the Master?’ No one has a certain answer except perhaps in circumstances where higher purposes are served. We must walk by faith” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 59–60).

Read Hebrews 11:1 and Alma 32:21 with participants. Point out that the Joseph Smith Translation of Hebrews 11:1, found in footnote 1*b*, says that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for.”

- According to these verses, what is the definition of faith?
- What are some situations that require married couples to “walk by faith,” as President Faust said?

Consider asking participants to share examples from their lives. Answers may include bad health, childlessness, aging, children with disabilities, death of loved ones, financial problems, wayward children, and natural disasters. Point out that challenges can come into our lives even when we are striving to live righteously.

Read Moroni 7:32–33 with participants. Emphasize that our faith must be centered in Jesus Christ. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that when we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, we are strengthened to face challenges:

“The Lord will give relief with divine power when you seek deliverance in humility and *faith in Jesus Christ*. . . . No one can help you without faith and effort on your part. Your personal growth requires that. Don’t look for a life virtually free from discomfort, pain, pressure, challenge, or grief, for those are the tools a loving Father uses to stimulate our personal growth and understanding. As the scriptures repeatedly affirm, you will be helped as you exercise *faith in Jesus Christ*. That faith is demonstrated by a willingness to trust His promises given through His prophets and in His scriptures” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 8).

Point out that husbands and wives must work together to center their lives on the Savior. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said:

“You want capability, safety, and security . . . in married life and eternity? Be a true disciple of Jesus. Be a genuine, committed, word-and-deed Latter-day Saint. Believe that your faith has *everything* to do with your romance, because it does. . . . Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the only lamp by which you can successfully see the path of love and happiness for you *and* for your sweetheart” (“*How Do I Love Thee?*” [Brigham Young University devotional address, 15 Feb. 2000], 6).

- How can increased faith in the Savior help married couples strengthen their relationship with one another? (Answers may include those listed below.)
 - a. They become more Christlike in their treatment of each other. They become more loving, helpful, gentle, patient, and willing to listen to one another.
 - b. They become more humble and willing to repent and follow the Savior’s teachings. The more willing each spouse is to repent and become like the Savior, the more harmonious the marriage will be.
- In what ways can married couples work together to increase their faith in the Savior? (Invite participants to share experiences that have strengthened their faith in the Savior. In addition to asking for participants’ responses, consider sharing the principles listed below.)
 - a. Obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel. (Share the following statement made by Bishop Robert D. Hales while he was serving as Presiding Bishop: “Obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel is essential to obtain faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” [in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 52; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 39].)
 - b. Study the scriptures together. (Read Helaman 15:7–8 with participants.)
 - c. Trust in the Lord. (Read Proverbs 3:5–6 with participants. Point out that as couples face challenges, they can determine to seek the Lord’s help with greater fervor, making their faith a more integral part of their daily lives.)

Husbands and wives are blessed when they pray together.

- What blessings can come when a husband and wife regularly kneel together in prayer? (Encourage participants to share experiences that appropriately

relate to this question. In addition, read the following quotation and one or both of the following examples.)

While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley counseled:

“I know of no single practice that will have a more salutary effect upon your lives than the practice of kneeling together as you begin and close each day. Somehow the little storms that seem to afflict every marriage are dissipated when, kneeling before the Lord, you thank him for one another, in the presence of one another, and then together invoke his blessings upon your lives, your home, your loved ones, and your dreams.

“God then will be your partner, and your daily conversations with him will bring peace into your hearts and a joy into your lives that can come from no other source. Your companionship will sweeten through the years; your love will strengthen. Your appreciation for one another will grow” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 83; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 72).

One husband said that his wife’s prayers help inspire him to be a better husband and father. When he kneels beside his wife in prayer, holding her hand, he listens to her plead with Heavenly Father about the concerns that are in her heart. His love for her increases because he knows that her heart is pure and her motives are genuine. He knows that when she speaks to Heavenly Father, she truly wants nothing more than to serve Him in righteousness.

In another family, the husband suffered from a long-term physical disability. Every evening before he and his wife went to bed, they thanked Heavenly Father for their blessings and sought His guidance in raising their four children on a meager income. Years later, when the husband was able to go back to work, they were asked how they had been able to manage during the difficult times. They testified that working together and praying together made the difference. Their sincere prayers had been answered with many blessings, including the hope they received through the comforting influence of the Spirit.

- How can praying together help husbands and wives resolve difficulties in their relationship? (As participants discuss this question, point out that when husbands and wives feel contention between each other, they sometimes stop praying together. However, praying together is a powerful tool to help them overcome such challenges.)

President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency told of the day he and his wife, Frances, were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple. Benjamin Bowring, the man who performed the ceremony, gave them the following counsel: “May I offer you newlyweds a formula which will ensure that any disagreement you may have will last no longer than one day? Every night kneel by the side of your bed. One night, Brother Monson, you offer the prayer, aloud, on bended knee. The next night you, Sister Monson, offer the prayer, aloud, on bended knee. I can then assure you that any misunderstanding that develops during the day will vanish as you pray. You simply can’t pray together and retain any but the best of feelings toward one another” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 81; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 70).

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “If, as husband and wife, you are having serious misunderstandings or if you feel

some strain or tension building up in your marriage, you should humbly get on your knees together and ask God our Father, with a sincere heart and real intent, to lift the darkness that is over your relationship, that you may receive the needed light, see your errors, repent of your wrongs, forgive each other, and receive each unto yourselves as you did in the beginning. I solemnly assure you that God lives and will answer your humble pleas” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 17; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 14).

Ask participants who are married to silently evaluate their efforts to pray with their spouse. Emphasize that in homes where there is only one parent, fervent personal prayer brings the blessings of God into the home.

Conclusion

Emphasize that when husbands and wives work together to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and to pray, they find greater happiness, unity, and ability to face their challenges.

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 21–24 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Finding Joy in Life,” by Elder Richard G. Scott. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Remind participants to bring their study guides to class for the next lesson.

THE HEALING POWER OF FORGIVENESS

LESSON

7

Purpose To help participants experience the peace that comes to those who forgive one another and to encourage participants to nurture a spirit of forgiveness in their homes.

Preparation

1. Review the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual). Look for ways to apply these principles in your preparation to teach.
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings, which outline the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder these doctrines and principles throughout the week, seeking the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. Remind participants to bring their copies of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide* to class. They will benefit from referring to it during the lesson.

Note: As you teach this lesson, be particularly sensitive to the circumstances of individual participants. If participants ask questions about seeking or extending forgiveness in serious family problems such as abuse or infidelity, gently encourage them to speak individually with the bishop.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

A spirit of forgiveness between husband and wife helps bring peace and a feeling of trust and security.

Read the following story related by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the Seventy:

“A couple . . . married later in life; the wife had been married before, but it was the husband’s first marriage. After several months of marital bliss, a serious disagreement erupted that so hurt the husband emotionally that he could not function at his daily tasks.

“As he reeled from the impact of this confrontation, he stopped to analyze the problem and realized that at least a part of the problem had been his. He went to his bride and stammered awkwardly several times, ‘I’m sorry, Honey.’ The wife burst into tears, confessing that much of the problem was hers, and asked forgiveness. As they held each other, she confessed that in her experience those words of apology had not been used before, and she now knew that any of their future problems could be worked out. She felt secure because she knew they both could say, ‘I’m sorry’; ‘I forgive’” (“Making a Marriage Work,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1981, 36–37).

Contrast this story with President Gordon B. Hinckley’s description of an interview he had with a husband and wife who were experiencing difficulties in their marriage (page 26 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“I recall listening at length to a couple who sat across the desk from me. There was bitterness between them. I know that at one time their love was deep and true. But each had developed a habit of speaking of the faults of the other. Unwilling to forgive the kind of mistakes we all make, and unwilling to forget them and live above them with forbearance, they had carped at one another until the love they once knew had been smothered. It had turned to ashes with the decree of a so-called ‘no-fault’ divorce. Now there is only loneliness and recrimination. I am satisfied that had there been even a small measure of repentance and forgiveness, they would still be together, enjoying the companionship that had so richly blessed their earlier years” (“Of You It Is Required to Forgive,” *Ensign*, June 1991, 4).

- What can we learn from these two examples?

Explain that this lesson is about the need to seek forgiveness and the importance of forgiving one another. Emphasize that a married couple can overcome many challenges in their relationship if they strive to have a spirit of forgiveness in their marriage. As they do so, they will learn the truth of President Gordon B. Hinckley’s promise to those who forgive one another: “There will come into your heart a peace otherwise unattainable” (*Ensign*, June 1991, 5).

Husbands and wives should seek each other’s forgiveness for their shortcomings and make sincere efforts to improve.

- Why is it important for husbands and wives to say “I’m sorry” and ask each other’s forgiveness for their shortcomings?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to ask for forgiveness? (Answers may include that selfishness and pride get in the way or that we sometimes blame others for our problems.)
- How can we find the strength to seek others’ forgiveness?

Emphasize that as we seek forgiveness, it is important to make sincere efforts to change and, as necessary, to repent of our sins. It is not enough to merely express sorrow for our actions; we need to work to be worthy of others’ forgiveness and also of the Lord’s forgiveness.

- What are the dangers of seeking forgiveness without making efforts to improve?

As you conclude this section of the lesson, consider sharing one or both of the following true stories:

After spending an evening out with his wife and a few friends, a man noticed that his wife was unusually quiet. He asked her if something was wrong, and she explained that she had felt embarrassed and hurt several times during the evening because he had told stories that were directed at her. At first, he defended his actions, saying that he was only kidding, that he had only wanted everyone to have a good time, and that she was overreacting. As they talked, however, he realized that he had truly hurt her feelings. He felt very sorry as he realized that his flippant attitude had embarrassed his wife many times. He apologized and promised not to embarrass her again. He kept his promise. From then on, he found ways to sincerely compliment her in the presence of others.

A husband and father who had become involved with pornography when he was a teenager had not stopped this practice. He was discouraged because he did not

know how he could change. Finally, he prayed diligently for help, humbled himself, and began to study the Savior's life and teachings. As he understood more about the blessings offered through the Atonement of the Savior, he realized that it was possible for him to change his behavior. He saw that his addiction was destroying himself and his marriage and family. His new understanding of the mission of Jesus Christ allowed him to make the needed changes and save his marriage.

Share the following statement, made by Elder Spencer W. Kimball while serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin. There must be a broken heart and a contrite spirit. There must be ‘sackcloth and ashes.’ There must be tears and genuine change of heart. There must be conviction of the sin, abandonment of the evil, confession of the error to properly constituted authorities of the Lord. There must be restitution and a confirmed, determined change of pace, direction and destination. Conditions must be controlled and companionship corrected or changed. There must be a washing of robes to get them white and there must be a new consecration and devotion to the living of all of the laws of God. In short, there must be an overcoming of self, of sin, and of the world” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 353).

Husbands and wives should seek to forgive one another.

Point out that in addition to seeking forgiveness for our sins and for mistakes we have made, we need to be forgiving. Sometimes we can become offended by little things people do, but the Lord has commanded us to forgive one another. Read Doctrine and Covenants 64:8–10 and Matthew 6:14–15 with participants.

- In what ways are marriages strengthened when husbands and wives willingly forgive one another?

President Gordon B. Hinckley counseled: “If there be any who nurture in their hearts the poisonous brew of enmity toward another, I plead with you to ask the Lord for strength to forgive. This expression of desire will be of the very substance of your repentance. It may not be easy, and it may not come quickly. But if you will seek it with sincerity and cultivate it, it *will* come. . . . There will come into your heart a peace otherwise unattainable” (*Ensign*, June 1991, 5; see also page 26 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*).

- Why is it sometimes difficult to forgive? (Answers may include that people seek to protect themselves from being hurt in the future, that they think forgiving is the same as condoning hurtful actions, or that they find it difficult to forgive a person who expects forgiveness without making efforts to overcome offensive behavior.)
- What are the dangers of husbands and wives refusing to forgive?
- In what ways does forgiveness bless those who are being forgiven? How can forgiveness from others help a person change unwanted behavior?
- In what ways can a spirit of forgiveness bless the person who forgives?

Suggest that when we feel that we have been wronged by others, we should ask ourselves how the Savior would want us to respond. As President Howard W. Hunter, the 14th President of the Church, counseled: “We must think more of

holy things and act more like the Savior would expect his disciples to act. We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, ‘What would Jesus do?’ and then act more courageously upon the answer” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 87).

Read the following counsel from President Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Church:

“We all have our weaknesses and failings. Sometimes the husband sees a failing in his wife, and he upbraids her with it. Sometimes the wife feels that her husband has not done just the right thing, and she upbraids him. What good does it do? Is not forgiveness better? Is not charity better? Is not love better? Isn’t it better not to speak of faults, not to magnify weaknesses by iterating and reiterating them? Isn’t that better? and will not the union that has been cemented between you and the birth of children and by the bond of the new and everlasting covenant, be more secure when you forget to mention weaknesses and faults one of another? Is it not better to drop them and say nothing about them—bury them and speak only of the good that you know and feel, one for another, and thus bury each other’s faults and not magnify them; isn’t that better?” (“Sermon on Home Government,” *Millennial Star*, 25 Jan. 1912, 49–50).

Conclusion

Share the following statement by Elder Spencer W. Kimball:

“What relief! What comfort! What joy! Those laden with transgressions and sorrows and sin may be forgiven and cleansed and purified if they will return to their Lord, learn of him, and keep his commandments. And all of us needing to repent of day-to-day follies and weaknesses can likewise share in this miracle” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 368).

As prompted by the Spirit, testify that when married couples are forgiving of one another’s shortcomings, they experience peace. They become more unified and more able to deal with the challenges of marriage and parenthood. Invite participants to nurture a spirit of forgiveness in their homes.

Refer to pages 25–27 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Of You It Is Required to Forgive,” by President Gordon B. Hinckley. Emphasize that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Remind participants to bring their study guides to class for the next lesson.

MANAGING FAMILY FINANCES

LESSON 8

Purpose To help participants practice sound principles of financial management in their homes.

Preparation

1. Consider ways you can apply the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Read this lesson’s bold headings. These headings give an overview of the doctrines and principles in the lesson. In addition, carefully study the article “Constancy amid Change,” by President N. Eldon Tanner, on pages 28–31 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. The principles in this article are the primary focus of the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder these principles throughout the week. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. Remind participants to bring their copies of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide* to class. They will need to refer to President Tanner’s article during the lesson.
4. If the pamphlet *One for the Money: Guide to Family Finance* (33293) is available, review it. Consider using it as part of the lesson.
5. If you use the additional resource material found on pages 39–40, bring to class a piece of paper and a pen or pencil for each participant.

Suggested Lesson Development

Proper financial management is essential for a happy marriage.

Invite a married couple to come to the front of the class (be sensitive about whom you invite). Explain that you are going to show how a little thing can either strengthen a marriage or cause serious marital problems. Then hold up a piece of money.

Give the piece of money to one of the people you have called to the front of the class.

- How is a marriage relationship affected when only the husband or wife controls family finances?

After participants have discussed this question, take the piece of money back.

- How is a marriage relationship affected when no one controls family finances or when interest-bearing debt controls the finances?

After discussing this question, give the piece of money back. Have the husband hold it in his hand, and ask his wife to place her hand over his. Explain that money management is not the most important key to a loving marriage relationship. However, when a husband and wife work together to manage their finances,

they become unified in an important effort to set their home in order. They also prevent difficult challenges. Some of the most serious problems in marriage arise when financial resources are not managed carefully and in the best interest of the family.

- In what ways is a marriage strengthened when the husband and wife work together to manage their finances?

Husbands and wives should work together to follow basic principles of money management.

Ask participants to turn to pages 28–31 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Have them scan the article titled “Constancy amid Change” and look for President N. Eldon Tanner’s “five principles of economic constancy.” When participants find the principles, list them on the chalkboard:

Pay an honest tithing.
Live on less than you earn.
Learn to distinguish between needs and wants.
Develop and live within a budget.
Be honest in all your financial affairs.

When you have listed all five principles on the chalkboard, use the following material to conduct a discussion about them:

Pay an honest tithing.

Invite a participant to read the following statement by President Tanner (page 29 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*):

“The payment of tithing is a commandment, a commandment with a promise. If we obey this commandment, we are promised that we will ‘prosper in the land.’ This prosperity consists of more than material goods—it may include enjoying good health and vigor of mind. It includes family solidarity and spiritual increase. I hope those of you not presently paying your full tithe will seek the faith and strength to do so. As you discharge this obligation to your Maker, you will find great, great happiness, the like of which is known only by those who are faithful to this commandment” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 119; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 81).

- How has the payment of tithing brought blessings to your family or to others you know?

Live on less than you earn.

Ask a participant to read the following statement by President Tanner (page 29 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*):

“I have discovered that there is no way that you can ever earn *more* than you can spend. I am convinced that it is not the amount of money an individual earns that brings peace of mind as much as it is having *control* of his money. Money can be an obedient servant but a harsh taskmaster. Those who structure their standard of living to allow a little surplus, control their circumstances. Those who spend a little more than they earn are controlled by their circumstances. They are in bondage. President Heber J. Grant once said: ‘If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet’ (*Gospel Standards*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111).

“The key to spending less than we earn is simple—it is called discipline. Whether early in life or late, we must all eventually learn to discipline ourselves, our appetites, and our economic desires. How blessed is he who learns to spend less than he earns and puts something away for a rainy day” (see Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 119; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 81).

Consider sharing the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church:

“The time has come to get our houses in order.

“So many of our people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings. . . .

“I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. . . .

“I urge you . . . to look to the condition of your finances. I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998; 70, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53–54).

- In what ways is debt a bondage?
- What practices have helped you get out of debt or avoid getting into debt? What have you done to be able to save a little of your income?

Learn to distinguish between needs and wants.

Have a participant read the following statement by President Tanner (page 30 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*):

“Overindulgence and poor money management place a heavy strain on marriage relationships. Most marital problems, it seems, originate from economic roots—either insufficient income to sustain the family or mismanagement of the income as earned” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 119–20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 81).

- What can we do to distinguish between needs and wants? Why is it essential for husbands and wives to do this together?

Develop and live within a budget.

Explain that no matter what their resources are, each married couple should work together to develop a family budget. A budget is an outline of planned income and expenses for a certain amount of time. It helps families ensure that

their expenses do not exceed their income. Married couples should discuss their budget as they determine their needs, wants, and financial goals. For example, after estimating their income for the next two weeks, a married couple may determine how much money they will use in different categories, such as tithing and other Church donations, savings, food, and mortgage or rent. During the two-week period, they record all their income and expenses. They counsel together before making large purchases or doing other things that affect the budget they have established. After the two-week period they can compare their actual income and expenses with their initial plan.

To help participants understand how to develop a budget, have them turn to the following sample budget, which is also found on page 32 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*.

Budget from _____ to _____		
	date	date
INCOME	PLANNED	ACTUAL
Wages or salary after taxes		
Other income		
Total income		
EXPENDITURES	PLANNED	ACTUAL
Tithing		
Other Church donations		
Long-term savings		
Savings for emergencies		
Food		
Mortgage or rent		
Utilities		
Transportation		
Debt payments		
Insurance		
Medical expenses		
Clothing		
Other		
Other		
Other		
Total expenditures		

Invite a participant to read the following statement by President Tanner (page 31 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*):

“It has been my observation in interviewing many people through the years that far too many people do not have a workable budget and have not disciplined themselves to abide by its provisions. Many people think a budget robs them of their freedom. On the contrary, successful people have learned that a budget makes real economic freedom possible” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 121; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 82).

Be honest in all your financial affairs.

Ask a participant to read the following statement by President Tanner (page 31 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*):

“The ideal of integrity will never go out of style. It applies to all we do. As leaders and members of the Church, we should be the epitome of integrity” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 121; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 82).

- Why is honesty an important part of all our financial dealings? Why is honesty between spouses essential in family finances?

Conclusion

Emphasize that husbands and wives must work together to manage their finances. Ask participants to consider how well they follow the principles discussed during the lesson. Invite them to make plans to improve their money management.

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 28–32 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Constancy amid Change,” by President N. Eldon Tanner. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Additional Resource Material

Review of the lessons in part A of the Marriage and Family Relations course

This lesson concludes part A of the Marriage and Family Relations course. If you are teaching the entire course, consider using the following exercise:

Give each participant a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask participants to spend three minutes listing the doctrines and principles they remember from the first eight lessons of this course. Have them underline the doctrines or principles that have been most meaningful to them. Encourage them to be prepared to talk about some of the items they underline. If they need help, use the table of contents on pages v–vii in this manual or the overview of the course on pages vii–viii in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*.

After three minutes, ask each participant to read one item from his or her list and explain why it is particularly meaningful. Summarize participants' insights

on the chalkboard, and acknowledge the importance of each comment. Then share an insight of your own. As time permits, repeat this exercise.

Thank those you teach for participating in the first part of this course. Explain that the second part of the course consists of eight lessons about how parents can strengthen their families and find joy in their responsibilities. Welcome all participants to continue attending the class.

PART B
PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES
TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES



“CHILDREN ARE AN HERITAGE OF THE LORD”

LESSON 9

Purpose To remind participants that when earthly parents welcome Heavenly Father’s children into their homes, they assume responsibility to love them, cherish them, teach them, and lead them to eternal life.

Preparation

1. As you prepare yourself to teach, look for ways to follow the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings. These headings give an overview of the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder ways to help participants apply these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. In advance, ask a few Primary children to come to the class at the beginning of the lesson and sing “I Am a Child of God” (*Children’s Songbook*, 2–3; *Hymns*, no. 301). Or be prepared to sing the song with participants.
4. In advance, invite one or two participants to prepare to talk briefly about the joy their children bring into their lives. Suggest that they share personal experiences as part of their presentations. Seek the guidance of the Spirit as you decide whom you should ask to fulfill this assignment.

Suggested Lesson Development

Heavenly Father entrusts His spirit children to earthly parents.

Ask the assigned Primary children to sing “I Am a Child of God” (see “Preparation,” item 3). Allow the children to return to their Primary classes immediately after the song. If you have not asked Primary children to come to the class, invite participants to sing the song with you.

- What truths are taught in this song?
- What can we learn from this song about the responsibilities of parents? (Consider referring to the words in the chorus: “Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, / Help me find the way. / Teach me all that I must do / To live with him someday.”)

President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church, counseled: “Never forget that these little ones are the sons and daughters of God and that yours is a custodial relationship to them, that He was a parent before you were parents and that He has not relinquished His parental rights or interest in these His little ones. Now, love them, take care of them. Fathers, control your tempers, now and in all the years to come. Mothers, control your voices; keep them down. Rear your children in love, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Take care of your little ones. Welcome them into your homes, and nurture and love them with all of your hearts” (“Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *Ensign*, July 1997, 73).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Every human being is a spirit child of God and lived with Heavenly Father before coming to earth. He entrusts his spirit children to earthly parents, who provide a mortal body for them through the miracle of physical birth, and gives to parents the sacred opportunity and responsibility to love, protect, teach, and to bring them up in light and truth so they may one day, through the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, return to our Father’s presence” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 104; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 78).

- How should this knowledge and understanding affect the way parents treat their children?

Read the following counsel, given by Bishop Robert D. Hales while he was serving as Presiding Bishop: “In many ways earthly parents represent their Heavenly Father in the process of nurturing, loving, caring [for], and teaching children. Children naturally look to their parents to learn of the characteristics of their Heavenly Father. After they come to love, respect, and have confidence in their earthly parents, they often unknowingly develop the same feelings toward their Heavenly Father” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 9).

Invite participants to ponder how parents’ attitudes and actions can influence children’s feelings toward Heavenly Father.

Parents should seek to meet each child’s individual needs.

Explain that each child has his or her own desires, talents, and needs. It is important for parents to strive to understand the individual capacities and needs of each child.

Many children are quite different from their parents. Their temperaments may be different, and they may have different strengths and weaknesses. These differences can be frustrating for parents, who may find it difficult to guide and help children through experiences they never had themselves. But parents should remember that Heavenly Father has entrusted these particular children to them and that He will help them know how to guide each child toward the fulfillment of his or her divine potential. Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, former general president of the Primary, said:

“We need to discover who our children really are. We need to know what interests them, what worries them, and what they would do if they had their fondest dreams come true. Nearly always, their fondest dreams are wonderful. We can let children be their own selves and not expect them to be reproductions of their parents. Give them varied experiences so they can *discover* what interests them, and then encourage these interests and talents—even if they are not the same as yours” (“Teaching Our Children,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 62).

- Why is it important that parents understand the individual characteristics and needs of each of their children?
- What harm can come when parents force children into activities or experiences that are inconsistent with the children’s individual talents and interests?
- What can parents do to nurture the talents and abilities of each of their children?

To help participants apply this principle, ask them to list some ways in which children in the same family might differ from one another and from their

parents. In doing so, participants may draw on their experiences as parents or their experiences with their own parents and siblings. Write their ideas on the chalkboard. Then discuss specific talents or characteristics in the list. Refer to specific talents or characteristics by asking questions such as the following:

- What could parents do to encourage a child to continue developing this talent?
- If a child has this characteristic, what might parents do to teach him or her to be loving and kind?
- In what ways could a child with this talent contribute to family home evening?

Point out that parents who understand the abilities and characteristics of each child are better able to discipline their children. Invite a participant to read the following counsel, given by Elder James E. Faust while he was serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (page 49 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*):

"One of the most difficult parental challenges is to appropriately discipline children. Child rearing is so individualistic. Every child is different and unique. What works with one may not work with another. I do not know who is wise enough to say what discipline is too harsh or what is too lenient except the parents of the children themselves, who love them most. It is a matter of prayerful discernment for the parents. Certainly the overarching and undergirding principle is that the discipline of children must be motivated more by love than by punishment" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 34).

- What experiences have helped you understand that discipline must be given according to each child's needs and circumstances?

Children are entitled to a loving relationship with their parents.

Point out that one of the most important things parents can do is to provide an atmosphere of love, friendship, and happiness in their home. Share the following statements:

While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley said: "How fortunate, how blessed is the child who feels the affection of his parents. That warmth, that love will bear sweet fruit in the years that follow" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 18).

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy said: "Like so much of what is worthwhile in life, our needs for friendship are often best met in the home. If our children feel friendship within the family, with each other, and with parents, they will not be desperate for acceptance outside the family" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 81; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 64).

- What do you recall from your childhood that helped you feel loved? In what ways have these feelings of love influenced you throughout your life?
- What can parents do in their homes to help their children know that they love them?

Point out that as parents strive to have a loving relationship with their children, good communication is vital. Elder M. Russell Ballard counseled: "Nothing is more important to the relationship between family members than open, honest

communication. This is particularly true for parents trying to teach gospel principles and standards to their children. The ability to counsel with our youth—and perhaps more importantly, to really listen to their concerns—is the foundation upon which successful relationships are built. Often what we see in the eyes and what we feel in the heart will communicate far more than what we hear or say” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 114; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 86–87).

- What can parents do to communicate well with their children? (Answers may include those in the following list.)
 - a. Be a tireless listener. As necessary, repeat what you understand from what the children say. This will show them that you really are listening and will help you be sure that you understand.
 - b. Spend time talking with and listening to children even when they are very young—even before they are able to talk.
 - c. Be interested in their ideas.
 - d. Generate conversations during mealtimes.
 - e. Spend time talking with them one-on-one.

To emphasize that parents should spend time alone with each of their children, share the following counsel from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Spend individual time with [your] children, letting them choose the activity and the subject of conversation. Block out distractions” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 41; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 33).

For more ideas on principles of good communication, see pages 24–26 in lesson 5.

Child abuse is an offense to God.

Read Matthew 18:6 with participants. Explain that parents should never abuse their children in any way.

- What are some forms of child abuse? (Consider listing participants’ responses on the chalkboard. Answers may include those in the following list.)
 - a. Violent anger
 - b. Yelling
 - c. Threats
 - d. Physical assault
 - e. Any sexual contact or inappropriate touching
 - f. Belittling comments
 - g. Withholding affection
 - h. Exposure to inappropriate movies, jokes, language, magazines, or Internet material
 - i. Improper exposure to the elements
 - j. Neglect, including lack of medical care and insufficient supervision or discipline
- In what ways do these actions harm children?

After discussing this question, explain that sometimes adults who were mistreated during childhood treat children in the same negative ways, not realizing how harmful the behavior is. Sometimes they may feel unable to change their behavior on their own. Emphasize that people who have been abusive can change their behavior as they humbly seek the Lord’s help and guidance.

Those who want help in understanding and changing their abusive behavior may turn to their bishop. He will be able to counsel them. He may also recommend counselors in LDS Family Services or community resources that provide help that is consistent with Church standards.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–44 with participants.

- In what ways does this passage relate to the way parents discipline their children?

While serving as First Counselor in the First Presidency, President Gordon B. Hinckley taught:

"Children don't need beating. They need love and encouragement. They need fathers to whom they can look with respect rather than fear. Above all, they need example. . . .

"My plea . . . is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and despair. Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture. They need kindness and refreshment and affection. Every home, regardless of the cost of the house, can provide an environment of love which will be an environment of salvation" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74–75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54).

President Brigham Young, the second President of the Church, taught:

"Bring up your children in the love and fear of the Lord; study their dispositions and their temperaments, and deal with them accordingly, never allowing yourself to correct them in the heat of passion; teach them to love you rather than to fear you" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 207).

Children bring great joy into their parents' lives.

Point out that it is important that parents remember their sacred and solemn responsibilities, but it is also important that they reflect on the joy their children bring into their lives. While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder James E. Faust observed that "while few human challenges are greater than that of being good parents, few opportunities offer greater potential for joy" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 32; see also page 48 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*).

Invite the assigned participants to talk briefly about the joy their children bring into their lives (see "Preparation," item 4). As time permits, consider sharing your feelings about the joy children have brought into your life.

Conclusion

Emphasize that children are gifts from our Heavenly Father. As the Psalmist said, "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). When earthly parents welcome Heavenly Father's children into their homes, they assume responsibility to love them, cherish them, teach them, and lead them to eternal life.

Refer to pages 35–38 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in "Ideas for Application"

and (2) reading the article “Precious Children, a Gift from God,” by President Thomas S. Monson. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Encourage participants to bring their study guides to class for the next lesson.

Additional

Resource Material

Statements to address the needs of those who are not in traditional family situations

To address the circumstances of participants who are not in traditional family situations, read one or more of the following statements:

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “Any souls who by nature or circumstance are not afforded the blessing of marriage and parenthood, or who innocently must act alone in rearing children and working to support them, will not be denied in the eternities any blessing—provided they keep the commandments. As President Lorenzo Snow [the 5th President of the Church] promised, ‘That is sure and positive’ ” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 23).

President Harold B. Lee, the 11th President of the Church, said: “[Women] who have been denied the blessings of wifhood or motherhood in this life—who say in their heart, if I could have done, I would have done, or I would give if I had, but I cannot for I have not—the Lord will bless you as though you had done, and the world to come will compensate for those who desire in their hearts the righteous things that they were not able to do because of no fault of their own” (“Maintain Your Place As a Woman,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, 56).

Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy explained: “Sometimes a family has just one parent because of death or divorce. Sometimes only one parent is a member of the Church. Sometimes one is less active than the other. Just the same, one spiritually motivated parent can successfully raise up a family to the Lord. Some of the best men and women I have known have come from such families. May the Lord always bless those good mothers and fathers who may think they have to do it ‘on their own’ but actually bring up their children under the direction of the Lord” (*Raising Up a Family to the Lord* [1993], xv).

THE SACRED ROLES OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS

LESSON 10

Part 1: Fathers' Roles

Purpose To help participants understand how fathers fulfill their sacred roles and how fathers and mothers can help one another as equal partners.

Preparation

1. Consider ways you can apply the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Ponder the doctrines and principles outlined in the lesson’s bold headings. Throughout the week, think about ways to teach these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. Remind participants to bring their copies of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide* to class.

Suggested Lesson Development

Fathers and mothers should work together to provide each of their children with a shield of faith.

Write *Shield of Faith* on the chalkboard. Read Doctrine and Covenants 27:15, 17 with participants.

- In what ways is faith like a shield?

Read the following statement by President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ask participants to listen carefully to see why children need to receive “the shield of faith” at home.

“Our Father’s plan requires that, like the generation of life itself, the shield of faith is to be made and fitted in the family. No two can be exactly alike. Each must be handcrafted to individual specifications.

“The plan designed by the Father contemplates that man and woman, husband and wife, working together, fit each child individually with a shield of faith made to buckle on so firmly that it can neither be pulled off nor penetrated by those fiery darts.

“It takes the steady strength of a father to hammer out the metal of it and the tender hands of a mother to polish and fit it on. Sometimes one parent is left to do it alone. It is difficult, but it can be done.

“In the Church we can teach about the materials from which a shield of faith is made: reverence, courage, chastity, repentance, forgiveness, compassion. In church we can learn how to assemble and fit them together. But the actual making of and fitting on of the shield of faith belongs in the family circle. Otherwise it may loosen and come off in a crisis” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 8).

- What does this statement teach about the roles of fathers and mothers?

Ask participants to turn to “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” on page iv in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide* (see also page viii in this manual). Read with them the following principles from the seventh paragraph of the proclamation:

“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.”

Explain that this lesson and lesson 11 are about the sacred roles of fathers and mothers. Although one lesson focuses on fathers’ roles and the other focuses on mothers’ roles, the two lessons apply to both fathers and mothers, who “are obligated to help one another as equal partners.” The lessons are also helpful for single parents who do all they can, with the Lord’s help, to fulfill both roles.

Fathers are to preside in love and righteousness.

Refer participants to the following statement in the proclamation on the family: “By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness.” Explain that the word *preside* means to lead and guide and to take responsibility for the family’s welfare.

Emphasize that as a man fulfills his responsibility to preside in the home, he works in partnership with his wife. President Howard W. Hunter, the 14th President of the Church, counseled: “A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. . . . By divine appointment, the responsibility to preside in the home rests upon the priesthood holder (see Moses 4:22). The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership. Presiding in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate independently of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50–51).

President Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th President of the Church, taught that fathers “must preside as Jesus Christ presides over his Church—in love, in service, in tenderness, and in example” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 68; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 45).

- Why is it important for fathers to preside in love and righteousness?

While serving as First Counselor in the First Presidency, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared to fathers: “Yours is the basic and inescapable responsibility to stand as the head of the family. That does not carry with it any implication of dictatorship or unrighteous dominion. It carries with it a mandate that fathers provide for the needs of their families. Those needs are more than food, clothing, and shelter. Those needs include righteous direction and the teaching, by example as well as precept, of basic principles of honesty, integrity, service,

respect for the rights of others, and an understanding that we are accountable for that which we do in this life, not only to one another but also to the God of heaven, who is our Eternal Father” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 78–79; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 60).

President Howard W. Hunter said: “We encourage you, brethren, to remember that priesthood is a righteous authority only. Earn the respect and confidence of your children through your loving relationship with them” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

To help participants understand what fathers must do to give spiritual leadership to their children, have them turn to pages 41–42 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. With participants, read and discuss the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson, the 13th President of the Church:

“With love in my heart for the fathers in Israel, may I suggest ten specific ways that fathers can give spiritual leadership to their children:

- “1. Give father’s blessings to your children. Baptize and confirm your children. Ordain your sons to the priesthood. These will become spiritual highlights in the lives of your children.
- “2. Personally direct family prayers, daily scripture reading, and weekly family home evenings. Your personal involvement will show your children how important these activities really are.
- “3. Whenever possible, attend Church meetings together as a family. Family worship under your leadership is vital to your children’s spiritual welfare.
- “4. Go on daddy-daughter dates and father-and-sons’ outings with your children. As a family, go on campouts and picnics, to ball games and recitals, to school programs, and so forth. Having Dad there makes all the difference.
- “5. Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children.
- “6. Have regular one-on-one visits with your children. Let them talk about what they would like to. Teach them gospel principles. Teach them true values. Tell them you love them. Personal time with your children tells them where Dad puts his priorities.
- “7. Teach your children to work, and show them the value of working toward a worthy goal. Establishing mission funds and education funds for your children shows them what Dad considers to be important.
- “8. Encourage good music and art and literature in your homes. Homes that have a spirit of refinement and beauty will bless the lives of your children forever.
- “9. As distances allow, regularly attend the temple with your wife. Your children will then better understand the importance of temple marriage and temple vows and the eternal family unit.
- “10. Have your children see your joy and satisfaction in service to the Church. This can become contagious to them, so they, too, will want to serve in the Church and will love the kingdom” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 62–63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 50–51).

Fathers are to provide their families with the necessities of life and protection.

Remind participants that the proclamation on the family states that fathers “are responsible to provide the necessities of life . . . for their families.”

- What are some temporal necessities of life? (Answers may include food, money, clothing, and shelter.) In what ways are fathers to provide these necessities?

President Howard W. Hunter said: “You who hold the priesthood have the responsibility, unless disabled, to provide temporal support for your wife and children. No man can shift the burden of responsibility to another, not even to his wife. The Lord has commanded that women and children have claim on their husbands and fathers for their maintenance (see D&C 83; 1 Timothy 5:8). . . . We urge you to do all in your power to allow your wife to remain in the home, caring for the children while you provide for the family the best you can” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

- What are some spiritual necessities of life? (Answers may include testimony, love, daily prayer and scripture study, gospel teaching, and priesthood ordinances.) What can fathers do to provide these necessities?
- How can a wife and children support the efforts of their husband and father to provide for them?

Refer participants to the following counsel in the proclamation on the family: “Fathers . . . are responsible to provide . . . protection for their families.”

- What do families need to be protected from?
- In what ways can husbands and fathers provide protection for their families?

President Howard W. Hunter said:

“A righteous father protects his children with his time and presence in their social, educational, and spiritual activities and responsibilities. . . .

“A man who holds the priesthood leads his family in Church participation so they will know the gospel and be under the protection of the covenants and ordinances. If you are to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, you must set your own homes in order. Together with your wife, you determine the spiritual climate of your home. Your first obligation is to get your own spiritual life in order through regular scriptural study and daily prayer. Secure and honor your priesthood and temple covenants; encourage your family to do the same” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

- What are some examples you have seen of fathers fulfilling their sacred responsibilities?

Note: If you are teaching this lesson on its own and you do not plan to teach lesson 11, consider discussing the following statement from the proclamation on the family: “In [their] sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.” Lesson 11 includes help for discussing this truth (see pages 56–57).

Conclusion

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 39–42 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “To the Fathers in Israel,” by President Ezra Taft Benson. Emphasize that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Remind participants to bring their study guides to class for the next lesson.

THE SACRED ROLES OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS

Part 2: Mothers' Roles

Purpose

To help participants understand how mothers fulfill their sacred roles and how mothers and fathers can help one another as equal partners.

Preparation

1. Review the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual). Look for ways to apply these principles in your preparation to teach.
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings, which outline the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder these doctrines and principles throughout the week, seeking the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. Remind participants to bring their copies of the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide* to class.

Suggested Lesson Development

Mothers participate in God’s work.

As an introduction to this lesson, read with participants the following excerpt from an address by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (page 44 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“One young mother wrote to me recently that her anxiety tended to come on three fronts. One was that whenever she heard talks on LDS motherhood, she worried because she felt she didn’t measure up or somehow wasn’t going to be equal to the task. Second, she felt like the world expected her to teach her children reading, writing, interior design, Latin, calculus, and the Internet—all before the baby said something terribly ordinary, like ‘goo goo.’ Third, she often felt people were sometimes patronizing, almost always without meaning to be, because the advice she got or even the compliments she received seemed to reflect nothing of the mental investment, the spiritual and emotional exertion, the long-night, long-day, stretched-to-the-limit demands that sometimes are required in trying to be and wanting to be the mother God hopes she will be.

“But one thing, she said, keeps her going: ‘Through the thick and the thin of this, and through the occasional tears of it all, *I know deep down inside I am doing God’s work*. I know that in my motherhood I am in an eternal partnership with Him. I am deeply moved that God finds His ultimate purpose and meaning in being a parent, even if some of His children make Him weep.

“‘It is this realization,’ she says, ‘that I try to recall on those inevitably difficult days when all of this can be a bit overwhelming. Maybe it is precisely our inability and anxiousness that urge us to reach out to Him and enhance His ability to reach back to us. Maybe He secretly hopes we *will* be anxious,’ she said, ‘and *will* plead for His help. Then, I believe, He can teach these children directly,

through us, but with no resistance offered. I like that idea,' she concludes. 'It gives me hope. If I can be right before my Father in Heaven, perhaps His guidance to our children can be unimpeded. Maybe then it can be *His* work and *His* glory in a very literal sense'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 47; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 36).

Invite those you teach to share their feelings about how mothers participate in God's work.

Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.

Have participants turn to page iv in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Refer them to the following statement in the seventh paragraph of the proclamation on the family: "Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children."

- In what ways do mothers nurture their children? (Invite participants to share experiences that show mothers' influence for good. Then share the following statements.)

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "As a mother guided by the Lord, you weave a fabric of character in your children from threads of truth through careful instruction and worthy example. You imbue the traits of honesty, faith in God, duty, respect for others, kindness, self-confidence, and the desire to contribute, to learn, and to give in your trusting children's minds and hearts. No day-care center can do that. It is your sacred right and privilege" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 102; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 74).

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, observed, "No teaching is equal, more spiritually rewarding, or more exalting than that of a mother teaching her children" ("Teach the Children," *Ensign*, Feb. 2000, 16).

To share more ideas about how mothers can nurture their children, have participants turn to pages 45–47 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Ask them to look for President Ezra Taft Benson's 10 suggestions on what mothers can do to spend effective time with their children. As participants find these suggestions, list them on the chalkboard as shown below. Discuss the benefits of following each of the suggestions.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Be at the crossroads. | 6. Be together at mealtimes. |
| 2. Be a real friend. | 7. Read scriptures daily. |
| 3. Read to your children. | 8. Do things as a family. |
| 4. Pray with your children. | 9. Teach your children. |
| 5. Have weekly home evenings. | 10. Truly love your children. |

Point out that latter-day prophets have emphasized the importance of mothers staying home with their children rather than entering the workplace. Share the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church:

“There are some women (it has become very many, in fact) who have to work to provide for the needs of their families. To you I say, do the very best you can. I hope that if you are employed full-time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries. The greatest job that any mother will ever do will be in nurturing, teaching, lifting, encouraging, and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. None other can adequately take her place” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 93; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 69).

- What sacrifices might families need to make in order to follow this counsel?

As you conclude this section of the lesson, share one or both of the following statements:

While serving as First Counselor in the First Presidency, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “I remind mothers everywhere of the sanctity of your calling. No other can adequately take your place. No responsibility is greater, no obligation more binding than that you rear in love and peace and integrity those whom you have brought into the world” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 79; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 60).

Speaking to mothers, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: “Yours is the grand tradition of Eve, the mother of all the human family, the one who understood that she and Adam *had* to fall in order that ‘men [and women] might be’ [2 Nephi 2:25] and that there would be joy. Yours is the grand tradition of Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel, without whom there could not have been those magnificent patriarchal promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which bless us all. Yours is the grand tradition of Lois and Eunice [see 2 Timothy 1:5] and the mothers of the 2,000 stripling warriors. Yours is the grand tradition of Mary, chosen and foreordained from before this world was, to conceive, carry, and bear the Son of God Himself. We thank all of you, including our own mothers, and tell you there is nothing more important in this world than participating so directly in the work and glory of God, in bringing to pass the mortality and earthly life of His daughters and sons, so that immortality and eternal life can come in those celestial realms on high” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 48; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 36; see also pages 44–45 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*).

Fathers and mothers are to help one another as equal partners.

Note: If you are teaching this lesson on its own and have not taught lesson 10, consider beginning this section of the lesson with the statement by President Boyd K. Packer on page 49 of this manual.

Refer participants to the following statement in the proclamation on the family: “In [their] sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”

- What does it mean for a husband and wife to be equal partners in their responsibilities?

Point out that husbands and wives who work together as equal partners are united in their efforts. They will support one another and draw upon one another's strengths and talents. Every married couple can receive the guidance of the Lord in deciding how to support one another in their responsibilities. They can make decisions based on divinely revealed principles and the unique strengths and abilities of each partner.

- What can a husband do to support his wife in her responsibilities to nurture the children?
- What can a wife do to support her husband in his responsibilities to preside and provide?
- What examples have you seen of husbands and wives effectively supporting one another in caring for and teaching their children?

Conclusion

Read Doctrine and Covenants 64:33–34 with participants.

- How does this scripture relate to the responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood?

Emphasize that mothers and fathers truly are “laying the foundation of a great work.” The everyday tasks of raising children may sometimes seem small and insignificant, but “out of small things proceedeth that which is great.” As fathers and mothers work together to fulfill their sacred responsibilities, their families will receive great blessings from the Lord.

As prompted by the Spirit, share your conviction of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 43–47 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the articles “Because She Is a Mother,” by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, and “To the Mothers in Zion,” by President Ezra Taft Benson. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

LESSON
12

TEACHING CHILDREN THROUGH EXAMPLE AND INSTRUCTION

Purpose

To help participants understand that parents are responsible to teach their children through example and instruction and to seek divine inspiration in all their efforts to teach.

Preparation

1. As you prepare yourself to teach, look for ways to follow the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings. These headings give an overview of the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder ways to help participants apply these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. If the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106) is available, study “Teaching by Example,” on pages 242–44, and “Reasoning with Children,” on pages 244–45. Consider referring to these articles during the lesson.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Parents are responsible to teach their children.

Share the following story related by President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church:

“Not long after we were married, we built our first home. We had very little money. I did much of the work myself. . . . The landscaping was entirely my responsibility. The first of many trees that I planted was a thornless honey locust. . . . It was only a wisp of a tree, perhaps three-quarters of an inch in diameter. It was so supple that I could bend it with ease in any direction. I paid little attention to it as the years passed.

“Then one winter day, when the tree was barren of leaves, I chanced to look out the window at it. I noticed that it was leaning to the west, misshapen and out of balance. I could scarcely believe it. I went out and braced myself against it as if to push it upright. But the trunk was now nearly a foot in diameter. My strength was as nothing against it. . . .

“When it was first planted, a piece of string would have held it in place against the forces of the wind. I could have and should have supplied that string with ever so little effort. But I did not, and it bent to the forces that came against it” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 419–20).

- How does President Hinckley’s experience apply to parents’ responsibility to teach children? (As participants discuss this question, read Proverbs 22:6 with them.)

Referring to his experience with the tree, President Hinckley said: “I have seen a similar thing, many times, in children whose lives I have observed.

The parents who brought them into the world seem almost to have abdicated their responsibility. The results have been tragic. A few simple anchors would have given them the strength to withstand the forces that have shaped their lives” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 420).

Explain that the Lord has given parents a sacred duty to teach their children. This responsibility must not be taken lightly or left to others. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized:

“We *cannot* and we *must not* allow the school, community, television, or even Church organizations to establish our children’s values. The Lord has placed this duty with mothers and fathers. It is one from which we cannot escape and one that cannot be delegated. Others may help, but parents remain accountable. Therefore, we must guard the sanctity of our homes because that is where children develop their values, attitudes, and habits for everyday living” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 106; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 79–80).

- Why is it essential for parents to teach their children rather than leave this responsibility to others? What are the risks when parents fail to fulfill this responsibility?
- In what ways can extended family members, such as grandparents and aunts and uncles, support parents’ efforts to teach children?

Parents can receive inspiration in teaching their children.

Have participants turn to Doctrine and Covenants 42:14. Explain that this verse contains an important key for parents as they teach their children. Then read the verse with participants.

- What key is found in this verse? (We must teach by the Spirit.) What does it mean to teach by the Spirit?

Read 2 Nephi 32:5 and 33:1 with participants. Point out that the Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, can help us know what we should do and say. When parents teach according to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost will carry the message to the hearts of their children.

Share the following counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“You parents, love your children. Cherish them. They are so precious. They are so very, very important. They are the future. You need more than your own wisdom in rearing them. You need the help of the Lord. Pray for that help and follow the inspiration which you receive” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 120; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 89).

- Why do parents need inspiration in their efforts to teach their children? What can parents do to invite the influence of the Holy Ghost as they teach their children?

Share the following story related by Elder F. Enzo Busche of the Seventy:

“One day when circumstances made it necessary for me to be at home at an unusual time, I witnessed from another room how our eleven-year-old son, just returning from school, was directing ugly words towards his younger sister. They were words that offended me—words that I had never thought our son would use. My first natural reaction in my anger was to get up and go after

him. Fortunately, I had to walk across the room and open a door before I could reach him, and I remember in those few seconds I fervently prayed to my Heavenly Father to help me to handle the situation. Peace came over me. I was no longer angry.

“Our son, being shocked to see me home, was filled with fear when I approached him. To my surprise I heard myself saying, ‘Welcome home, son!’ and I extended my hand as a greeting. And then in a formal style I invited him to sit close to me in the living room for a personal talk. I heard myself expressing my love for him. I talked with him about the battle that every one of us has to fight each day within ourselves.

“As I expressed my confidence in him, he broke into tears, confessing his unworthiness and condemning himself beyond measure. Now it was my role to put his transgression in the proper perspective and to comfort him. A wonderful spirit came over us, and we ended up crying together, hugging each other in love and finally in joy. What could have been a disastrous confrontation between father and son became, through the help from the powers above, one of the most beautiful experiences of our relationship that we both have never forgotten” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 98–99; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 70).

- What might have resulted if this father had followed his impulse to act in anger?

Ask participants to share experiences when the Holy Ghost led them to teach or help a child in a certain way—perhaps in a way that they had not originally planned.

- What can parents do to prepare themselves to receive the guidance of the Holy Ghost? (As participants discuss this question, invite them to read some or all of the following scripture passages: Alma 17:2–3; D&C 11:21; 20:77; 121:45–46; 136:33.)

Parents teach through example and instruction.

Explain that parents teach their children in two general ways: through their example and through their words.

- In what ways do parents’ examples add meaning to their words in teaching their children?

Have participants read the following statement made by Elder James E. Faust while he was serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (page 49 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“When parents try to teach their children to avoid danger, it is no answer for parents to say to their children, ‘We are experienced and wise in the ways of the world, and we can get closer to the edge of the cliff than you.’ Parental hypocrisy can make children cynical and unbelieving of what they are taught in the home. For instance, when parents attend movies they forbid their children to see, parental credibility is diminished. If children are expected to be honest, parents must be honest. If children are expected to be virtuous, parents must be virtuous. If you expect your children to be honorable, you must be honorable” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 33–34).

- What can parents do to teach gospel principles by example?

While serving as Presiding Bishop, Bishop Robert D. Hales said, “As I think about . . . relationships with my own family, I cannot help but return to the example I received from my own parents” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 8). The following recollections show how Bishop Hales learned from his parents:

“My father taught me respect for the priesthood. While serving in the Aaronic Priesthood, we passed the sacrament using stainless steel sacrament trays which, as a result of spilled water, were often dulled with hard water spots. As a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood, I was responsible for helping prepare the sacrament. Father asked me to bring home the trays, and together we cleaned them with steel wool until every tray sparkled. When I passed the sacrament, I knew we had participated in making the sacrament ordinance a little more sacred” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 8).

“I am thankful for a mother who was devoted to her husband and children—a mother who taught by example. I am thankful for her dedicated service in the Relief Society for over thirty years. At the age of sixteen, upon receiving my driver’s license, I was privileged to learn from her as she took me along when she assisted the bishop in caring for the poor and the needy” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 90; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 65).

- What opportunities do parents have to teach their children through their words?

As participants discuss this question, explain that family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evening will be discussed in lesson 16. In addition to these established opportunities for teaching, many teaching opportunities come at unplanned times during daily life. These opportunities can be powerful teaching moments because they are closely tied to what children are experiencing. Because such opportunities may come and go quickly, parents need to recognize them and be prepared to teach principles that their children are ready to learn.

- What are some unplanned teaching moments that parents can watch for? (If participants have difficulty answering this question, consider sharing the following suggestions to prompt discussion.)

Parents can find teaching moments when children have questions and worries, problems in getting along with siblings or friends, opportunities to make decisions, or concerns about ideas presented through the media. Other teaching opportunities come when children need to learn from their mistakes, when they are giving service, when they need to control their anger, or when they need help recognizing the influence of the Holy Ghost.

- In what ways can family routines such as mealtime and bedtime provide opportunities to teach?
- In what ways can one-on-one time with children give parents opportunities to teach? What can parents do to ensure that they spend time alone with each of their children?
- What have you been able to teach children during unplanned teaching moments?

Explain that the next four lessons in this course will discuss principles that parents should teach their children and opportunities parents have to teach.

Conclusion

Emphasize that when parents seek direction from the Lord, He will guide them in their efforts to teach their children. Parents must be diligent and consistent in their efforts to teach through their example and their words.

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 48–53 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the articles “The Greatest Challenge in the World—Good Parenting,” by Elder James E. Faust, and “A Table Encircled with Love,” by Elder LeGrand R. Curtis. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

TEACHING GOSPEL PRINCIPLES TO CHILDREN

LESSON
13

Part 1

Purpose To help participants increase their desire and ability to teach children about basic gospel principles and ordinances.

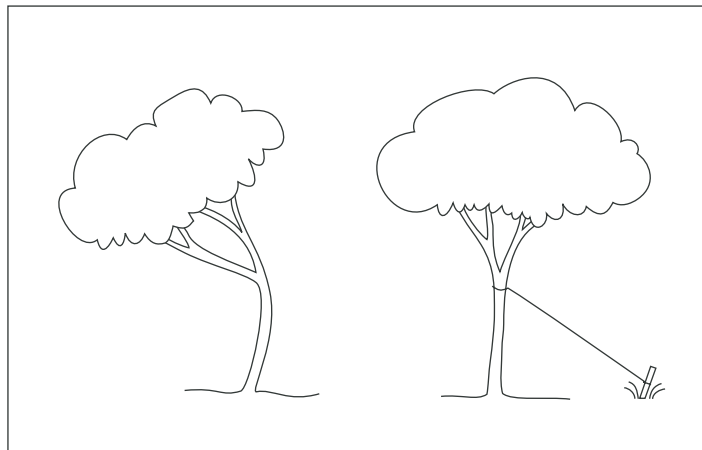
Preparation

1. Consider ways you can apply the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Ponder the doctrines and principles outlined in the lesson’s bold headings. Throughout the week, look for ways to teach these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Parents’ teachings can help children stay strong in the faith.

Draw the following pictures on the chalkboard:



- What do these two pictures represent? What do the pictures teach about raising children?

If participants have difficulty answering these questions, remind them of President Hinckley’s story about planting a tree, from lesson 12. (If you are teaching this lesson on its own and have not taught lesson 12, share the story on pages 58–59 before you discuss the pictures on the chalkboard.)

The tree on the left represents a child who is straying from the gospel because his or her parents have not taught and lived the gospel in the home. The tree on the right represents a child who is learning the gospel because of parents’ words and example. When strong winds blow, a young tree that is guided by a string will continue to grow straight. Likewise, children are more likely to stay strong in the faith when their parents have taught them simple gospel principles.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28 with participants.

- According to this scripture passage, what does the Lord require parents to teach their children? (List participants' responses on the chalkboard as shown below.)

Faith in Jesus Christ
Repentance
Baptism
Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost
Prayer
Walking uprightly before the Lord

- Why is it important that parents teach these principles and ordinances to their children while the children are young?

While serving as Presiding Bishop, Bishop Robert D. Hales explained: “Children who are taught to pray and who pray with their parents when young are more likely to pray when they are older. Those who are taught when they are young to love God and believe He lives will more often continue their spiritual development and increase their feelings of love as they mature” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 10).

Parents are to teach their children the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Use the following questions to discuss ways parents can help their children apply the principles of faith and repentance and prepare to be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. As you guide the discussion, encourage participants to share examples from their own lives.

- To exercise faith in Jesus Christ, we must have a correct understanding of His character and attributes. What can parents do to help their children understand the character and attributes of the Savior?
- Briefly review the accounts of Jesus healing Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43) and Nephi responding to the command to get the brass plates (1 Nephi 3:1–7). How can these scripture accounts help children exercise faith in Jesus Christ?
- How can sharing experiences from our lives help strengthen a child's faith?

Point out that parents need to look for opportunities to teach their children that faith helps us through the challenges and difficulties of life. For example, if a child is having difficulty in school or with a friend, parents could read a scripture passage with the child, help him or her pray for guidance and comfort, and then help the child understand how the Lord provides help.

- As parents strive to teach their children about repentance, why is it important for them to watch for teaching moments in daily life?

Explain that when parents see their children make unwise decisions, they can ask the children how they feel about the decisions and what they could have done differently. They can allow the children to correct the mistakes and, as needed, express sorrow to the Lord and those who have been offended or hurt. Parents can also help their children recognize the happiness and peace that come through true repentance.

- Briefly review the conversions of Alma the Younger (Mosiah 27; Alma 36) and the Anti-Nephi-Lehies (Alma 23). How can these scripture accounts help children value the blessings of repentance and forgiveness?
- Review the baptismal covenant by reading Mosiah 18:8–10 and Doctrine and Covenants 20:37 with participants. How can parents help their children prepare to make and keep the baptismal covenant?
- In what ways can parents help their children look forward to being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost?

Parents should “teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”

- Why is parents’ example the greatest teacher in helping children make prayer a regular part of their lives?
- In addition to setting an example of prayer, what are some principles about prayer that parents can teach their children? (As participants respond to this question, read and discuss the following scripture passages and quotation. Encourage participants to share experiences that relate to these teachings.)
 - a. James 1:5–6 (God will give us wisdom if we ask Him in faith.)
 - b. 2 Nephi 32:9 (We should pray always. We pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ.)
 - c. Alma 37:37 (When we counsel with the Lord in all we do, He will direct us for good.)
 - d. 3 Nephi 18:19–21 (When we pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, we will receive what we ask for if it is right. We should pray in our families.)
 - e. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10 (When we are humble, the Lord will answer our prayers.)

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about the importance of using “the language of prayer.” In English, this includes using the words *Thee*, *Thou*, *Thy*, and *Thine* in place of *you* and *your*. He said that children can learn this language from their parents:

“We learn our native language simply by listening to those who speak it. This is also true of the language with which we address our Heavenly Father. The language of prayer is easier and sweeter to learn than any other tongue. We should give our children the privilege of learning this language by listening to their parents use it in the various prayers offered daily in our homes” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 20; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 18).

- How can parents use family prayer as a time to teach their children?
- What can parents do to encourage their children to pray individually?

- The Lord has said that parents must teach their children to “walk uprightly” before Him (D&C 68:28). In what ways can parents use the settings of home and family to encourage their children to “walk uprightly before the Lord”? (Answers may include that parents can teach their children to obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel and stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all places.)
- What can grandparents and other extended family members do to help parents teach gospel principles to children? In what ways have you seen that the good example of extended family members can help children?

Conclusion

Emphasize that God has given parents the responsibility to teach their children principles of righteousness. Encourage participants to strive to live the principles taught in this lesson and to determine ways in which they can better teach these principles to children.

As prompted by the Spirit, share your convictions of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 54–57 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Strengthening Families: Our Sacred Duty,” by Elder Robert D. Hales. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

TEACHING GOSPEL PRINCIPLES TO CHILDREN

LESSON
14

Part 2

Purpose To help participants increase their desire and ability to teach children compassion and service, honesty and respect for others' property, the joy of honest labor, and moral purity.

Preparation

1. Review the principles under "Your Responsibilities as a Teacher" (pages ix–xi in this manual). Look for ways to apply these principles in your preparation to teach.
2. Read the lesson's bold headings, which outline the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder these doctrines and principles throughout the week, seeking the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants' needs. If necessary, take two lesson periods to teach these principles.
3. If the following materials are available, review them and bring them to class:
 - a. *For the Strength of Youth* (34285).
 - b. *A Parent's Guide* (31125).
 - c. *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106). As you review this resource, give special attention to "Teaching Responsibility," on pages 246–47, and "Teaching about Procreation and Chastity," on pages 253–60. Consider referring to these articles during the lesson.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Parents show love for their children when they teach them.

Share the following experience related by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy:

"While we were growing up in a small community, my father saw the need for my brother and me to learn the principle of work. As a result, he put us to work on a small farm on the edge of town where he had been raised. He ran the local newspaper, so he could not spend much time with us except early in the morning and in the evening. That was quite a responsibility for two young teenagers, and sometimes we made mistakes.

"Our small farm was surrounded by other farms, and one of the farmers went in to see my father one day to tell him the things he thought we were doing wrong. My father listened to him carefully and then said, 'Jim, you don't understand. You see, I'm raising boys and not cows.' After my father's death, Jim told us his story. How grateful I was for a father who decided to raise boys, and not cows. In spite of the mistakes, we learned how to work on that little farm, and I guess, although they didn't say it in so many words, we always knew we were more important to Mother and Father than the cows or, for that matter, anything else" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 12; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 11).

- What impresses you about this story?

Emphasize that Elder Dunn and his brother always knew that their parents loved them. One way parents show love for their children is to take time to help them learn and apply gospel principles. This lesson discusses how to teach children five basic principles of gospel living: compassion and service, honesty, respect for others' property, the joy of honest labor, and moral purity.

Parents must teach children compassion and service.

Explain that throughout His ministry, the Savior taught the importance of loving and serving others. He taught this principle by word and example.

- What benefits come to children who have learned from their parents to love and serve others? (In addition to asking for participants' responses, share the following examples.)

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, observed:

“Over the years I have watched one dear sister give service far beyond any calling to teach or lead in the Church. She sees a need and serves—not ‘Call me if you need help,’ but ‘Here I am; what can I do?’ She does so many small things, like holding someone’s child in a meeting or taking a child to school who has missed the bus. She always looks for new faces at church and steps forward to make them welcome. . . .

“She learned that spirit of service from her mother. The spirit of service is best taught at home. We must teach our children by example and tell them that an unselfish spirit is essential to happiness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 6).

In one family, a child was having a difficult time. To help him face his challenges, his parents encouraged him to perform a secret act of service for another family member each day. By the end of the week, he was worrying less about his own troubles and beginning to enjoy the blessings and peace that come from caring for others.

- What can we learn at home about service that we cannot learn elsewhere?
- What suggestions can you share that could help parents teach their children to serve others?

Consider writing participants' answers on the chalkboard. Encourage participants to share examples from their own lives. Also ask them to share ideas for family service activities. As you guide the discussion, bring out the following ideas:

- a. Parents can set an example by serving family members, fulfilling Church assignments, and reaching out to help others around them.
- b. They can look for opportunities for their children to serve family members and others around them. Even very young children can feel the joy of serving.

Parents must teach children honesty and respect for others' property.

Share the following counsel from President N. Eldon Tanner, who served as First Counselor in the First Presidency:

“Training in honesty begins in the home. Each of us has personal possessions which are ours alone. We can and should share such things as toys and games and our services to one another; but we have money, or jewelry, or clothing that is the personal property of each and should not be taken without the consent of the owner. A child who respects such honesty in the home is not apt to violate the principle outside the home. On the other hand, lack of such training fosters disrespect for the rights and property of others” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 64; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 44).

- What can happen when children are not taught to respect others’ property?
- In what ways can children learn in the home to be honest and to respect others’ property? When should parents begin teaching these principles to their children?

Parents must teach children about the rewards of honest labor.

Explain that Church leaders have frequently counseled parents about the importance of teaching children to work. Although it is sometimes difficult to teach children to work, parents should persist in this effort. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled, “Teaching children the joy of honest labor is one of the greatest of all gifts you can bestow upon them” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 62).

- What are the values of teaching children the principles of work and industry when they are young? How can parents help their children learn to work? (As participants discuss this question, encourage them to share examples from their lives. Consider mentioning the following ideas to prompt discussion.)
 - a. Set an example for children by cheerfully helping with household chores.
 - b. Give children responsibilities that match their abilities.
 - c. Take time to teach children how to succeed in their responsibilities.
 - d. Express appreciation for children’s help.

Read one or both of the following statements:

President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church, counseled, “Children need to work with their parents—to wash dishes with them, to mop floors with them, to mow lawns, to prune trees and shrubbery, to paint and fix up and clean up and do a hundred other things where they will learn that labor is the price of cleanliness and progress and prosperity” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 707).

While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder James E. Faust taught: “An essential part of teaching children to be disciplined and responsible is to have them learn to work. . . . The best teachers of the principle of work are the parents themselves. For me, work became a joy when I first worked alongside my father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers. I am sure that I was often more of an aggravation than a help, but the memories are sweet and the lessons learned are valuable. Children need to learn responsibility and independence. Are the parents personally taking the time to show and demonstrate and explain so that children can, as Lehi taught, ‘act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon’? (2 Nephi 2:26)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 34; see also page 50 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*).

- Why is it important for children to work alongside their parents and other family members? In what ways are relationships influenced when family members work together?
- What are some rewards of honest labor? (Answers may include those in the following list.)
 - a. Satisfaction and joy in a job well done
 - b. A sense of accomplishment
 - c. Education in essential practical skills
 - d. Realization of self-worth
 - e. Material rewards, such as academic honors and financial benefits
- In what ways is work a spiritual blessing as well as a temporal blessing?
- What can parents do to help their children earn money and use it wisely? How can parents help their children balance employment with other types of work, such as Church work, schoolwork, and household chores?
- What are some dangers of parents allowing their children to avoid the responsibility to work?

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“The gospel of work is part of ‘the fulness of the gospel.’ Though joyful, missionary work is work. Though joyful, temple work is work. Alas, a few of our underwhelmed youth work all right, but mostly at trying to please themselves. . . .

“Be careful . . . when you inordinately desire things to be better for your children than they were for you. Do not, however unintentionally, make things worse by removing the requirement for reasonable work as part of their experience, thereby insulating your children from the very things that helped make you what you are!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 50; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 38).

Parents must teach children moral purity.

Emphasize that parents have an obligation to teach their children the Lord’s standards of moral purity. This will help the children resist temptation.

- Why should parents take the initiative to discuss moral purity and sexuality with their children? What are the risks when parents do not take this initiative?

Point out that in today’s world, children cannot avoid hearing about sexuality. However, much of what they hear in the world promotes the abuse of the sacred power of procreation. Children—and especially teenagers—need accurate information and true doctrine about these subjects. Parents must help them gain strength to withstand the falsehoods taught in the world. They must teach children the Lord’s plan for the use of the power of procreation.

Invite participants who are parents to tell about successful experiences they have had with teaching their children about these subjects. In addition to asking for participants’ insights, share the following principles:

Very young children should be given clear and simple information about the sacred nature of their bodies. This understanding helps them protect themselves from those who may try to take advantage of them. As children approach the age of puberty, parents should carefully explain to them the changes that will occur in their bodies. They should explain that physical maturation is normal and a part of God's plan.

Parents should also help their children understand that sexuality is good when used within the bounds set by the Lord but that it is a serious sin when used in violation of the Lord's commands. Teenagers need clear guidelines from their parents about the Lord's standards.

Display the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*. Explain that this pamphlet provides excellent help for youth and their parents. It includes information on the Church's standards for dating, dress, language, media, and music and dancing. Encourage parents to read and discuss this pamphlet individually with each of their children who is in early adolescence. This provides an easy way for parents to approach subjects that can be difficult to talk about. It also gives youth an opportunity to ask specific questions about standards of morality. Share the following excerpt from pages 14–15 in the pamphlet:

“Our Heavenly Father has counseled that sexual intimacy should be reserved for his children within the bonds of marriage. The physical relationship between a husband and a wife can be beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the procreation of children and for the expression of love within a marriage: ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh’ (Genesis 2:24).

“Because sexual intimacy is so sacred, the Lord requires self-control and purity before marriage as well as full fidelity after marriage. In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect to you. Never treat your date as an object to be used for your own lustful desires or ego. Improper physical contact can cause a loss of self-control. Always stay in control of yourself and your physical feelings.

“The Lord specifically forbids certain behaviors, including all sexual relations before marriage, petting, sex perversion (such as homosexuality, rape, and incest), masturbation, or preoccupation with sex in thought, speech, or action. . . .

“Homosexual and lesbian activities are sinful and an abomination to the Lord (see Romans 1:26–27, 31). Unnatural affections, including those toward persons of the same gender, are counter to God's eternal plan for his children. You are responsible to make right choices. Whether directed toward those of the same or opposite gender, lustful feelings and desires may lead to more serious sins. All Latter-day Saints must learn to control and discipline themselves.”

Display *A Parent's Guide* and the *Family Home Evening Resource Book*. Explain that these resources offer help to parents who are striving to teach their children about chastity. *A Parent's Guide* is devoted entirely to this subject. The *Family Home Evening Resource Book* addresses the subject on pages 253–60.

Emphasize that as parents talk with their children about sexuality, they can testify that moral purity leads to joy and peace.

- Why is it essential for parents to set an example of moral purity in addition to teaching about it? In what ways can parents set an example of moral purity?

Point out that children can learn true principles of moral purity by the way their parents treat each other, by the types of literature and other media that their parents allow in the home, and by the way their parents speak about the sacred power of procreation.

Conclusion

Emphasize that parents have the responsibility to teach their children principles of righteousness. Encourage participants to strive to live the principles taught in this lesson and to determine ways in which they can better teach these principles to children.

As prompted by the Spirit, share your convictions of the truths discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 58–63 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Teach the Children,” by President Boyd K. Packer. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

GUIDING CHILDREN AS THEY MAKE DECISIONS

LESSON
15

Purpose To teach principles that will help parents guide their children in making decisions.

Preparation

1. As you prepare yourself to teach, look for ways to follow the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Read the lesson’s bold headings. These headings give an overview of the doctrines and principles in the lesson. As part of your preparation, ponder ways to help participants apply these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. If the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106) is available, study “Agency—The Key to Growth,” on pages 237–38, and “Reclaiming a Wayward Child,” on pages 252–53. Consider referring to these articles during the lesson.
4. Bring a small pebble to class. You will use it during the last section of the lesson.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Children need guidance as they make decisions.

Read the following poem, shared in a general conference address by President Thomas S. Monson of the First Presidency:

He stood at the crossroads all alone,
The sunlight in his face.
He had no thought for the world unknown—
He was set for a manly race.
But the roads stretched east, and the roads stretched west,
And the lad knew not which road was best;
So he chose the road that led him down,
And he lost the race and victor’s crown.
He was caught at last in an angry snare
Because no one stood at the crossroads there
To show him the better road.

Another day, at the self-same place,
A boy with high hopes stood.
He, too, was set for a manly race;
He, too, was seeking the things that were good;
But one was there who the roads did know,
And that one showed him which way to go.
So he turned from the road that would lead him down,
And he won the race and the victor’s crown.
He walks today the highway fair
Because one stood at the crossroads there
To show him the better way.

[quoted from *Central Christian Monitor*, in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 66–67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 48]

Explain that children and youth often stand at crossroads—times when they face decisions that can have a lasting effect on their lives. Parents, who know the roads, should be there to help their children make righteous decisions. Even when parents cannot be with their children at moments of decision, the children should be able to receive guidance and rely on the promptings of the Holy Ghost as they remember their parents’ teachings.

Parents can help children exercise their agency righteously.

Explain that agency is one of Heavenly Father’s greatest gifts to us. Agency is the power to choose and to act for ourselves. It is through agency that we choose to follow the Savior and receive the blessing of eternal life (see 2 Nephi 2:25–28).

Read Doctrine and Covenants 58:27–28 with participants.

- In what ways does this passage apply to parents as they help their children make decisions?
- What are some benefits of allowing children to make decisions?

The following material outlines principles parents can follow to help their children exercise their agency righteously. Discuss these principles with participants.

Teach children Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness.

With participants, read the following excerpt from Alma 12:32:

“Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption.”

- Why is it significant that God gave commandments *after* making known the plan of redemption? In what ways does this principle apply to parents’ efforts to encourage their children to obey the commandments?

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“Young people wonder ‘why?’—Why are we commanded *to do* some things, and why are we commanded *not* to do other things? A knowledge of the plan of happiness . . . can give young minds a ‘why.’ . . .

“You will not be with [your] children at the time of their temptations. At those dangerous moments they must depend on their own resources. If they can locate themselves within the framework of the gospel plan, they will be immensely strengthened.

“The plan is worthy of repetition over and over again. Then the purpose of life, the reality of the Redeemer, and the reason for the commandments will stay with them.

“Their gospel study, their life experiences, will add to an ever-growing witness of the Christ, of the Atonement, of the restoration of the gospel” (*The Great Plan of Happiness* [address to religious educators, 10 Aug. 1993], 3).

Give children clear guidelines based on gospel principles.

Explain that parents should give their children clear guidelines to follow in making decisions. This effort includes teaching the gospel and establishing standards of behavior in the home. Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Seventy taught:

“Do not be afraid to set clear moral standards and guidelines. Be sure to say no when it is needed. . . . Let [your children] know that there are some things that, as members of your family, you simply do not do. Some parents seem to be almost pathologically concerned about their children’s popularity and social acceptance and go along with many things that are really against their better judgment, such as expensive fads, immodest clothes, late hours, dating before age sixteen, R-rated movies, and so on. For children and parents, standing up for what is right may be lonely at times. There may be evenings alone, parties missed, and movies which go unseen. It may not always be fun. But parenting is not a popularity contest” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 11).

- What can parents do to set clear moral guidelines for their families? (As participants discuss this question, encourage them to share examples from their lives.)

Read Moroni 7:15–19 with participants.

- What counsel does this passage give about how to know good from evil? In what ways can parents apply this counsel as they set guidelines for their children?
- In what areas of their lives do children and youth sometimes need help in judging between good and evil? In what ways can parents use the counsel in Moroni 7:15–19 to help children make righteous decisions?

Help children recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost in their lives.

Explain that Moroni 7:15–19 is about the Light of Christ, which helps us know good from evil. In addition to following the Light of Christ, we can receive guidance from the Holy Ghost, who “will show unto [us] all things what [we] should do” (2 Nephi 32:5) and will help us “know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5). As children learn to recognize and follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, they will receive further help in making decisions. After children have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, parents can help them develop a desire to be worthy of the constant companionship of the Spirit.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told about how his mother helped him recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost:

“After my baptism and confirmation, my mother drew me aside and asked, ‘What do you feel?’ I described as best I could the warm feeling of peace, comfort, and happiness I had. Mother explained that what I was feeling was the gift I had just received, the gift of the Holy Ghost. She told me that if I lived worthy of it, I would have that gift with me continually. That was a teaching moment that has lived with me all my life” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 42; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 33).

- What can parents do to help their children feel and recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost? (Answers may include that parents can encourage their children to study the scriptures, listen to sacred music, keep the commandments, and pray with real intent. They can also share spiritual experiences with their children and express love for them.)

Emphasize that it is essential for parents to encourage their children’s private religious behavior, such as personal scripture study, prayer, and fasting. Participation in the family’s religious activities is important, but it is not enough.

Give small children opportunities to make simple decisions.

Point out that parents can give small children opportunities to make decisions. They can keep decisions simple, usually offering only two choices and making sure both choices are acceptable. For example, a parent could say, “Would you like to wear your blue shirt or your red shirt today?” or “Would you rather hear a story or continue playing until bedtime?” Once parents have offered such a choice, they should accept the child’s decision.

- How might such simple decisions help children prepare to make far-reaching and difficult decisions later in their lives?

Help children understand that some decisions have eternal consequences.

Explain that when children face difficult decisions such as selecting Sabbath activities, choosing friends, making educational plans, or setting goals for a career, it is important that they know how to make judgments based on gospel truths. It is essential that they understand that their decisions can have eternal consequences. Parents must take time early in their children’s lives to talk with them about these principles.

- What are some ways parents can guide their children as they counsel with them? (Answers may include that parents can share their own experiences, remind their children of the Lord’s commandments, and help their children consider the eternal consequences of different choices.)
- What situations might require a parent to intervene when a child is making unrighteous decisions?

Ask a participant to read the following counsel from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (page 66 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*):

“It is the parents’ duty to intervene when they see wrong choices being made. That doesn’t mean parents take from children the precious gift of agency. Because agency is a God-given gift, ultimately the choice of what they will do, how they will behave, and what they will believe will always be theirs. But as parents we need to make sure they understand appropriate behavior and the consequences to them if they pursue their wrongful course. Remember, there is no such thing as unlawful censorship in the home. Movies, magazines, television, videos, the Internet, and other media are there as guests and should only be welcomed when they are appropriate for family enjoyment. Make your home a haven of peace and righteousness. Don’t allow evil influences to contaminate your own special spiritual environment. Be kind, thoughtful, gentle, and considerate in what you say and how you treat each other. Then family goals based on gospel standards will make it easier to make good decisions” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 114; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 87).

Parents should allow children to learn from the consequences of unwise decisions.

Point out that although parents should sometimes intervene to help their children make righteous decisions, they should not intervene to prevent the consequences of their children’s unwise decisions.

- What can result when parents protect their children from the consequences of their decisions? What good can come from allowing children to experience the natural consequences of their decisions? (Encourage participants to share examples from their own lives. Then read the following statements.)

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “Parents, don’t make the mistake of purposefully intervening to soften or eliminate the natural consequences of your child’s deliberate decisions to violate the commandments. Such acts reinforce false principles, open the door for more serious sin, and lessen the likelihood of repentance” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 34).

Elder Robert D. Hales taught: “It is frightening to allow our children to learn from the mistakes they may make, but their willingness to choose the Lord’s way and family values is greater when the choice comes from within than when we attempt to force those values upon them. The Lord’s way of love and acceptance is better than Satan’s way of force and coercion, especially in rearing teenagers” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 34).

Parents should show unfailing love for children who go astray.

Point out that even after parents’ best efforts, some children may make decisions that cause great sorrow for themselves and others. Parents must never cease to love children who go astray. Elder Richard G. Scott said:

“Some of you have children who do not respond to you, choosing entirely different paths. Father in Heaven has repeatedly had that same experience. While some of His children have used His gift of agency to make choices against His counsel, He continues to love them. Yet, I am sure, He has never blamed Himself for their unwise choices” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 34).

While serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Howard W. Hunter gave the following counsel to parents who have done their best but grieve because of the mistakes of a child:

“A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent. Perhaps there are children who have come into the world that would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. Likewise, perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65).

Give a participant the pebble that you have brought to class (see “Preparation,” item 4). Ask the participant to place the pebble directly in front of his or her eye. Then ask the individual to describe what he or she can see. Read the following analogy, which was shared by Elder Richard G. Scott while he was serving in the Seventy:

“When I take a small pebble and place it directly in front of my eye, it takes on the appearance of a mighty boulder. It is all I can see. It becomes all-consuming—like the problems of a loved one that affect our lives every waking moment. When the things you realistically can do to help are done, leave the matter in

the hands of the Lord and worry no more. Do not feel guilty because you cannot do more. Do not waste your energy on useless worry. The Lord will take the pebble that fills your vision and cast it down among the challenges you will face in your eternal progress. It will then be seen in perspective. In time, you will feel impressions and know how to give further help. You will find more peace and happiness, will not neglect others that need you, and will be able to give greater help because of that eternal perspective” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 70; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 60).

- In what ways can parents show constant love to a son or daughter who has gone astray? How can they show such love without condoning the actions of the son or daughter?

Read Luke 15:11–32 with participants. Explain that this passage is often called the parable of the prodigal son. However, it could also be referred to as the parable of the loving father.

- What can we learn from this parable about how parents’ love can influence wayward children?

While serving as First Counselor in the First Presidency, President Gordon B. Hinckley taught:

“Through the history of the generations of man, the actions of rebellious children have been laden with sorrow and heartbreak, but even when there has been rebellion, the strong cords of family life have reached out to encircle the rebellious one.

“I know of no more beautiful story in all of literature than that told by the Master as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. It is the story of a heady and greedy son who demanded his inheritance, which he wasted until none was left. Penitent, he returned to his father, and his father, seeing him afar off, ran to him and embraced him and fell upon his neck and kissed him” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 72).

Conclusion

Emphasize the importance of guiding children as they make decisions and then allowing them to learn from the consequences of their actions. Remind participants that the Lord will bless parents as they continue to love and work with their children. Then read the following statement made by Bishop Robert D. Hales while he was serving as Presiding Bishop:

“Certainly parents will make mistakes in their parenting process, but through humility, faith, prayer, and study, each person can learn a better way and in so doing bless the lives of family members now and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10–11; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 10).

As prompted by the Spirit, testify of the principles discussed during the lesson.

Refer to pages 64–67 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the article “Like a Flame Unquenchable,” by Elder M. Russell Ballard. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

FAMILY PRAYER, FAMILY SCRIPTURE STUDY, AND FAMILY HOME EVENING

LESSON
16

Purpose To encourage families to hold regular family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evening and to teach the gospel in each of these settings.

Preparation

1. Consider ways you can apply the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Ponder the doctrines and principles outlined in the lesson’s bold headings. Throughout the week, think about ways to teach these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. If the following materials are available, bring some or all of them to class. Prepare to display them as you discuss family home evening.
 - a. The scriptures.
 - b. *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106).
 - c. *Family Guidebook* (31180).
 - d. *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276) and *Family Home Evening Video Supplement 2* (53277).
 - e. *Gospel Principles* (31110).
 - f. Church magazines.
 - g. *Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (35448).
 - h. Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society manuals.
 - i. Class member study guides for Gospel Doctrine courses.
 - j. *For the Strength of Youth* (34285).
 - k. Church-produced scripture story books such as *Book of Mormon Stories* (35666).
 - l. The Gospel Art Picture Kit (34730).
4. If you use the review exercise on page 84, bring to class a piece of paper and a pen or pencil for each participant.

Suggested Lesson

Development

Family prayer and scripture study and family home evening must be high priorities for every Latter-day Saint family.

Explain that in February 1999 the First Presidency sent a letter to members of the Church throughout the world. The letter included the following instruction:

“We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform” (First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999).

- Why is this counsel particularly important today?

Explain that this lesson discusses what parents can do to hold daily family prayer and scripture study and weekly family home evenings.

Families receive great blessings when they pray together.

Read 3 Nephi 18:21 with participants. Then share the following counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church:

“Let every family in this Church have prayer together. Now, it is important to have individual prayer, but it is a wonderful thing to have family prayer. Pray to your Father in Heaven in faith. Pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can do nothing better for your children than to have them taking their turn in the family prayer, expressing gratitude for their blessings. If they do that while they are young, they will grow with a spirit of thanksgiving in their hearts” (“Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 5).

- What can families do to establish a habit of daily family prayer? What challenges have you encountered with holding daily family prayer, and how have you worked to resolve them?
- What can families do to make family prayer a meaningful time for them? (In addition to participants’ responses, share some or all of the following suggestions.)
 - a. Parents can take time before the prayer to ask if there is anything in particular for which the family should thank Heavenly Father or if there are any concerns they should remember in their prayer.
 - b. Parents can ensure that children are regularly given the opportunity to say the family prayer.
 - c. The family can remember to pray for Church leaders, missionaries, and family members who need special blessings.
 - d. Parents can use their prayers as a time to teach. For example, their expressions of gratitude can foster similar feelings in their children.
 - e. Parents can mention each of their children by name in their prayers, helping the children feel the love that their Heavenly Father and their earthly parents have for them.
- What blessings have you and your family received because of family prayer?

Family scripture study helps families draw nearer to God.

Write the following phrases on the chalkboard or read them aloud:

Increased reverence

Increased respect and consideration

Less contention

The ability to counsel children in greater love and wisdom

More responsiveness to parents’ counsel

Increased righteousness

Abundant faith, hope, and charity

Peace, joy, and happiness

Ask participants to ponder the following question without answering aloud:

- What could you do to bring these blessings more abundantly into your home?

Explain that President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency testified that these blessings can come more abundantly into our homes when we study the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon:

“I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 90; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 67).

Referring to President Romney’s promises, President Ezra Taft Benson, the 13th President of the Church, said: “These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

Invite participants to tell about blessings that have come to their families through family scripture study.

- What have you done to make family scripture study successful? What challenges have you encountered, and how have you worked to resolve them? (In addition to participants’ responses, share some or all of the following suggestions.)
 - a. Work together to set a time to study the scriptures as a family every day. This is often the hardest part of family scripture study. However, families can seek the guidance of the Spirit as they determine what will work best in their circumstances.
 - b. Consider establishing a certain amount of time or a specific number of verses, chapters, or pages to read each day.
 - c. If possible, see that each family member has access to a set of scriptures. Even children who cannot read will benefit from having their own scriptures. Parents could give scriptures to their children at baptisms, birthdays, or other special occasions. Or children could earn money to buy their own scriptures.
 - d. Take turns reading, helping younger children as needed. After reading a passage, review what has been covered and state it in a way that younger children will understand.
 - e. Have young children draw pictures of scripture stories. For example, a family could create a mural depicting Lehi’s vision of the tree of life.
 - f. Memorize favorite verses together.
 - g. Read scriptures that relate to special occasions such as Easter, Christmas, a baptism, a priesthood ordination, or a temple dedication.
 - h. Research a particular gospel topic together, using the Topical Guide or the Bible Dictionary.
 - i. Keep a family notebook for recording questions, goals, or impressions connected with the scripture reading.

Point out that if it becomes difficult to gather the family together for scripture study, parents should remember that their efforts may have a more lasting effect than they imagine. Sister Susan L. Warner, who served as second counselor in the Primary general presidency, said:

“In our family we have tried to hold early-morning scripture study. But we were often frustrated when one son complained and had to be coaxed out of bed. When he finally came, he would often put his head right down on the table. Years later, while serving his mission, he wrote home in a letter: ‘Thank you for teaching me the scriptures. I want you to know that all those times I acted like I was sleeping, I was really listening with my eyes closed’ ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 109; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 79).

Family home evening helps families fortify themselves against worldly influences.

Explain that in 1915, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency instructed parents to begin holding a regular “Home Evening.” This was to be a time for parents to teach their families the principles of the gospel. The First Presidency wrote: “If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 4:339).

President Gordon B. Hinckley told of how his parents followed President Smith’s counsel:

“In 1915 President Joseph F. Smith asked the people of the Church to have family home evening. My father said we would do so, and so we would warm up the parlor where Mother’s grand piano stood and do what the President of the Church had asked.

“We were miserable performers as children. We could do all kinds of things together while playing, but for one of us to try to sing a solo before the others was like asking ice cream to stay hard on the kitchen stove. In the beginning, we would laugh and make cute remarks about one another’s performance. But our parents persisted. We sang together. We prayed together. We listened quietly while Mother read Bible and Book of Mormon stories. Father told us stories out of his memory. . . .

“Out of those simple little meetings, held in the parlor of our old home, came something indescribable and wonderful. Our love for our parents was strengthened. Our love for brothers and sisters was enhanced. Our love for the Lord was increased. An appreciation for simple goodness grew in our hearts. These wonderful things came about because our parents followed the counsel of the President of the Church. I have learned something tremendously significant out of that” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 211–12).

Explain that every President of the Church since President Joseph F. Smith has emphasized the importance of family home evening. Today the First Presidency has counseled families to hold family home evening every Monday night.

Point out that family home evening should always include family prayer and a lesson, which can be presented by a parent or one of the children. Parents can help younger children prepare and present lessons.

Explain that the Church has produced materials that can help families conduct successful family home evenings. Display the Church-produced materials that you have brought to class (see “Preparation,” item 3). Give special emphasis to the *Family Home Evening Resource Book*, which is a valuable tool for parents. This book is the Church’s main resource for helping families plan and conduct family home evenings. It includes lessons and ideas for activities.

- In addition to prayer and a lesson, what other activities can families include in family home evenings? (Answers may include playing games, reading the scriptures, singing hymns or songs, holding family councils, and eating treats.)
- How can parents use family home evening to help meet their family’s needs? (In addition to asking for participants’ ideas, share the following example.)

One father developed family home evening lessons by talking individually with his children. As he talked with his children, he would often ask questions about specific areas of concern, such as “What do the boys at school say about girls?” or “Does anyone ever talk about illegal drugs?” The answers the children gave helped him recognize what they needed to learn and discuss. He and his wife would then sit down together and plan lessons based on those needs. The children enjoyed sharing their ideas and were prepared to face real-life situations.

- What can parents do to encourage every family member to participate in family home evening?
- What blessings have come into your family as a result of holding family home evening?

Conclusion

Emphasize that daily family prayer and scripture study and weekly family home evening will strengthen family relationships, fortify family members’ testimonies, and prepare family members to deal with life’s challenges.

As prompted by the Spirit, express your love for your family and testify of the truths discussed during this lesson and throughout the course.

Refer to pages 68–72 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the articles “The Blessings of Family Prayer,” by President Gordon B. Hinckley, and “Therefore I Was Taught,” by Elder L. Tom Perry. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

Additional Resource Material

Participating in wholesome recreational activities as a family

Explain that in addition to family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evening, wholesome recreational activities can help families develop strong bonds of love and unity. Parents should plan times when their family

can participate together in such activities. President Ezra Taft Benson counseled: “Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 51).

- What are the benefits of participating in recreational activities as a family?

Consider sharing the following suggestions or some of your own to prompt discussion:

- a. Family members who enjoy activities together will develop greater love and harmony.
 - b. They will have fun together and build relationships that will last throughout their lives.
 - c. Children will enjoy time with their parents and be more willing to listen to and follow their parents’ counsel.
- What memories do you have of family activities when you were a child? In what ways have these activities influenced your life?

Invite participants to share ideas for fun, interesting, and memorable family activities that have little or no cost.

Review of the lessons in part B of the Marriage and Family Relations course

This lesson concludes part B of the Marriage and Family Relations course. If you have been teaching the entire course, consider using the following exercise:

Give each participant a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask participants to spend three minutes listing the doctrines and principles they remember from lessons 9 through 16 of this course. Have them underline the doctrines or principles that have been most meaningful to them. Encourage them to be prepared to talk about some of the items they underline. If they need help, use the table of contents on pages v–vii in this manual or the overview of the course on pages vii–viii in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*.

After three minutes, ask each participant to read one item from his or her list and explain why it is particularly meaningful. Summarize participants’ insights on the chalkboard, and acknowledge the importance of each comment. Then share an insight of your own. As time permits, repeat this exercise.

Express your gratitude to those you teach for their participation in this course, and encourage them to continue to live according to the doctrines and principles they have discussed throughout the course. Also encourage them to read “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” periodically with their families and follow its counsel in their homes.