

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.