

Choosing OUR ROLES IN LIFE

As disciples of Jesus Christ, the most important calling we will ever have is that of parent.

By Samuel J. Palmer

As part of a recent seminary lesson, I wrote the following words on the whiteboard: “I am . . .” I then invited the students to complete the statement. Many students gave answers like “a soccer player” or “a band member.”

When I asked the students to consider their roles in relationship to the gospel, their answers changed. This time they said such things as, “I am a priesthood holder,” “I am a young woman,” and “I am a friend.” But the most common response was, “I am a child of God.”

Like my students, I am a lot of things. I am a husband, a father, an active Church member, and a runner. Professionally, I am a full-time seminary teacher and a U.S. Navy Reservist.

Each of us holds various roles at the same time. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and within our families, we may be husbands or wives, brothers or sisters, home or visiting teachers, nurturers and providers, Sunday School teachers or Primary teachers. The list goes on. But of all these things, which role defines

us most? As disciples of Jesus Christ, the most important calling we will ever have is that of parent.

Each of us will face times when the various roles we play come into competition with each other, forcing us to consider who we are and what role should take precedence in a particular moment. Recently I had to ask myself that same question.

I am constantly training for a run, whether it is a marathon or the Navy’s Physical Readiness Test. One winter day I was running on our treadmill at home. I had been running for just over an hour at a fast pace and had about a half-mile left. Into the room came our little two-year-old daughter, Lucy. She stood there and stared at me. I put out my fist and said, “Give me some bones,” but she did not raise her little hand and punch my knuckles like she usually did. So I put out my fist again and said, “How about some knuckles?” No reply, just a stare. I wanted so badly to finish that last half-mile to meet my goal, but I felt she needed me more in that moment than I needed to finish my workout.



Lucy needed her father, not a runner.

I stopped the treadmill, wrapped her in one of her small, fuzzy blankets, and held her close. She was gratified and her happy smile returned.

What was the greater title that day?

Father.

Depending on the moment, we will finish the statement “I am . . .” differently; yet there are some answers many of us share, and some answers are more important than others.

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” reminds us, “Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and 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.”¹

As children of God, we all need to be nurtured. And as disciples of Christ, we all need to nurture others. Just as I learned that day when Lucy needed me to choose the role of father over the role of runner, we all need to choose to act in the right role at the right time. That choice will make a critical difference in the joy, happiness, and success of ourselves and others. ■

NOTE

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.