

# SUCCESSFUL FAMILY HOME EVENINGS WITH

# TEENS



*Here are ideas for keeping teens enthusiastic about family home evening.*

## Keep It Simple

Some of our best family night lessons with older children have been when we opened up the lesson for discussion. They could ask any question and share any concern. These discussions often led to testimony bearing, searching the scriptures, father's blessings, and such.

As our children became teenagers, this format created a wonderful opportunity to get to know them as their testimonies grew and their experiences varied. Often they would share what they were learning in seminary or Sunday School. Sometimes they just asked for family stories and experiences from our lives.

These family home evenings were gospel centered and created a great bond among us. Half of my children are adults now and they all cherish memories of our family home evenings. Denise Ferrin, Utah, USA

## Be Consistent

We try to keep to a regular format for our family home evenings: songs, prayers, lesson, activity, and treats. Some things that we have found that work great for our teens is to have a more in-depth lesson with them after

our little ones are in bed. We've also found it very effective to choose lessons or activities that are good for any age. For instance, we have had fun with a game we call scripture charades. Sometimes we make specific rules (which book of scripture to focus on, etc.), but other times, anything goes (while making sure to show proper respect for sacred events). Our younger children get help or suggestions from the older ones or us as parents, and they act out a scripture story or a segment of Church history. The others have to guess what story they are depicting. We then talk about those verses in the scriptures, so this game often serves as a lesson and an activity. The teens try to choose more obscure scripture stories. It can be quite a challenge to figure out what they are doing. We've found this is fun for everyone.

We have also found many games that all of us enjoy. During the Olympics, we held a family Olympic challenge. It consisted of somersaults, cartwheels, headstands, balancing on

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## CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY



“Each family prayer, each episode of family scripture study, and each family home evening is a brushstroke on the canvas of our souls. No one event may appear to be very impressive or memorable. But just as the yellow and gold and brown strokes of paint complement each other and produce an impressive masterpiece, so our consistency in doing seemingly small things can lead to significant spiritual results. ‘Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great’ (D&C 64:33). Consistency is a key principle as we lay the foundation of a great work in our individual lives and as we become more diligent and concerned in our own homes.”

Elder David A. Bednar, “More Diligent and Concerned at Home,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 19–20.







one foot, and so forth. The rest of the family judged the performances. Our children got a kick out of watching Mom and Dad trying to do cartwheels—all ages loved it!

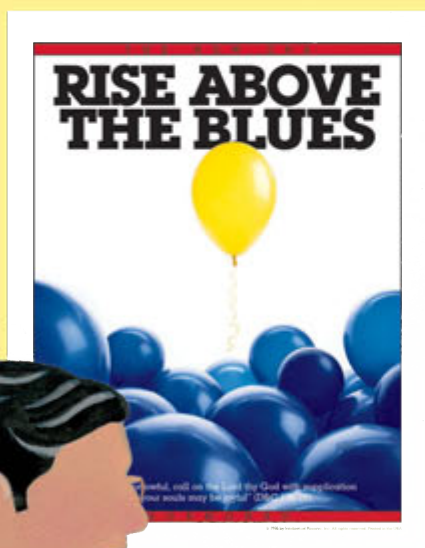
Sometimes we combine the treats portion of the evening with the activity. Making “banana men” is a family favorite. We cut a banana in half and decorate it with chocolate chips (eyes, nose, mouth), chocolate or butterscotch syrup, whipped cream (hair, beard, etc.), candy sprinkles, and anything else “fun” and see what creations we make. All the children enjoyed the creative outlet, especially because when we are finished, we eat the banana men!

Above all, consistency is the key in our family—keeping the same format, week after week.

Greg Williams, Oregon, USA

### Plan Ahead and Seek Guidance

One way to plan ahead for family home evening is to allow time for a brief family scheduling



council. We take a few minutes and let our teens write their commitments on the family calendar—sports practices, scouting, Mutual, piano lessons, etc. This lets them know that their activities are important, and helps them plan for Monday night family home evening.

The most important assistance we have, though, is asking for Heavenly Father’s help. Before planning any lesson, we ask for Heavenly Father to bless our efforts in touching our children’s hearts and spirits.

Jane McBride Choate, Colorado, USA

### Customize Lessons for Your Family

I ordered the Mormonad posters, which are in the *New Era*, and the frame designed to hold them. Every week as each person had a turn to give the lesson, they chose a poster, talked about it, read the scripture reference, and told why it was important. The poster would then be framed and displayed in the kitchen by the table for a week. These home evening lessons weren’t long. Still, they allowed us to feel the Spirit and be together. As we ate our meals during the week we would talk about the message on the poster and why it was important, and as a family, we could continue to grow and learn spiritually.

Elaine Fort, Arizona, USA





### Give Them A Chance to Teach Younger Children

**W**e have had consistent family nights since joining the Church in 1994, but not all of them have been a success.

This year, however, we found a family home evening resource that helps our older children prepare meaningful and fun lessons that our younger children can enjoy. Best of all, they can put these lessons together in less than five minutes the night before family night. The “miracle” resource: *Behold Your Little Ones* (item number 37108000), is the new nursery manual produced by the Church and approved for use at church and at home. We access the manual on the Church Web site (LDS.org) where links are available to the scripture references, pictures in the lesson, and other resource materials (like coloring pages). We can even use the interactive music player on the site to provide accompaniment for the songs in the lessons.

We have found, after a few tries at using this book, that the lessons are just as meaningful for the older children as for the younger. Our teens like reliving their Primary years, relearning basic principles, and seeing the enthusiasm of their younger siblings.

Elizabeth S. Stiles, Pennsylvania, USA

### Teach from Your Own Experiences

**L**ike many families, we rotate family home evening teaching assignments. My teens are generally willing to take their turn; however, they are reluctant to sit through lessons taught by my husband or me.

I stumbled upon an answer to this situation when we were waiting for our oldest son’s mission call. One night I decided to read excerpts from my journal that covered that same time in my life. I selected entries about my excitement to serve the Lord and my missionary preparations, including insights I received during my interviews with my bishop and stake president. I read my joyful reaction to being called by a prophet of God to serve in Indiana. At the end, I shared letters I had sent home to my parents from the Missionary Training Center (MTC), and all of these experiences were sprinkled with adventures with my family and friends. My teens were

### NOW IS THE TIME



“Now is the time to have meaningful family home evenings, to read the word of God, and to speak to our Heavenly Father in earnest prayer. Now is the time to fill our hearts with gratitude for the Restoration of His Church, for living prophets, the Book of Mormon, and the priesthood power that blesses our lives. Now is the time to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, become His disciples, and walk in His way.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Way of the Disciple,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2009, 75–78.

listening, laughing, and asking questions for over an hour.

I discovered that reading real-life experiences is a powerful way to testify of Christ and show the blessings that come through living the gospel. Sharing my stories has also helped bridge the generation gap between me and my children because it helps my teens discover that we have had many feelings in common. ■

Janice Stringham LeFevre, Utah, USA

