

Home Teachers

The Lord admonished early priesthood holders to “teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church; . . . and visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray . . . and attend to all family duties” (D&C 20:42, 47). At least in part, the home teaching program of the Church fulfills this divine direction.

“Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father’s children,” taught President David O. McKay (1873–1970), ninth President of the Church. It “is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as home teachers to carry the divine spirit into every home and heart.”¹ As home teachers listen to the inspiration they receive through the Holy Ghost, Heavenly Father can direct them to provide individual, personalized guidance and service to each of His children. In return, President McKay promised that “to love the work and do our best will bring unbounded peace, joy and satisfaction to us as dedicated teachers of God’s children.”²



WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

Here, members of the Church share how their lives have been blessed by home teachers who have answered the “divine call” to nurture and inspire God’s children.

Helping at a Moment’s Notice

Our now 15-year-old son, Juke, has developmental disabilities, including autism and profound cognitive disabilities, that sometimes cause him to be aggressive toward himself and others. In August 2005, Juke took a sudden turn for the worse, and his doctors admitted him to a hospital far from our home.

The next morning, I looked for someone to assist me in giving our son a priesthood blessing. We had just been assigned new home teachers, and I could remember only one of them by name: John Zimmerman.

We will never forget the quiet act of selfless service that Brother Zimmerman provided us in our time of need.



Brother Zimmerman had a young family and was just starting his career in a high-intensity Washington, D.C. job. I called him at work, explained what had happened, and asked if he could go with me to give our son a blessing. Our visit would most likely take all day. I told Brother Zimmerman I was sure I could find someone else if he could not do it. He checked with his employer, and then told me that he could go right then.

When we arrived, Juke was less aggressive but certainly

bewildered. Brother Zimmerman anointed Juke with consecrated oil, and I sealed the anointing and gave him a blessing. After the blessing, Juke immediately became less agitated. My wife and I felt the Comforter, and as we observed Juke's calmed behavior, we knew that he did too.

We thanked Brother Zimmerman and said good-bye. But when we left a couple hours later, we found him sitting in the lobby, waiting to make sure everything was all right. We were amazed by this additional act of selflessness.

Shortly after my wife and I arrived home, Brother Zimmerman knocked on our door. He said he had felt prompted to visit us. He gave me a powerful blessing and assisted me as I blessed my wife. Finally, he told us to call him if he could do anything else. We knew he meant it.

Brother Zimmerman was our family's home teacher for less than a month, but we will never forget the Christlike act of selfless service that he provided us in our time of need.

Paul F. Wight, Virginia, USA

Teaching by Example

My husband was a member of the Church when we married, but I was not. I was content with my Christian beliefs and had no intention of joining any particular church. Still,

I wanted to support my husband in his religion since it was a significant element of his life. So when our new home teacher set up an appointment, I was prepared to join in the visit and learn more about my husband's beliefs, despite my nervousness.

Brother Wagner, our home teacher, visited consistently. My knowledge of the scriptures was limited, and I often felt intimidated by the large volume of gospel materials available to members, but Brother Wagner had a way of teaching that was never condescending; he simply supported and strengthened my understanding as though we were sharing the pursuit of knowledge together. By relating

his personal experiences and honest feelings, he motivated me to be more consistent in my scripture study and more diligent in my prayers. And it was my personal scripture study and prayers that helped me know that I should be baptized. It was a special moment for me when Brother Wagner said the opening prayer at my baptism.

Brother Wagner has continued to serve faithfully as our home teacher for more than two years. He brings the Spirit with him on every visit and shares his testimony, which helps me increase my own. He has been a true blessing in our lives.

Holly Graham, Arizona, USA



“Even a Bishop Needs a Home Teacher”

Several years ago my wife, our four young children, and I moved to Hawaii. Although we had felt prompted to move, we struggled with the adjustment to life on an island, the distance from our extended family, and the travel required for my new assignment.

A few months after we arrived, I was called to be the bishop of our ward. During one of our first ward Priesthood Executive Council meetings, in an effort to ease the heavy home teaching burdens of our priesthood brethren, I opted not to have home teachers for our family. Despite our family’s challenges, we were fairly consistent in our scripture study and family home evening efforts, as well as in spending one-on-one time with our children. So I felt we would be fine.

I remember the rainy evening when the doorbell rang and there stood Brother Kanaile, an 85-year-old Hawaiian brother from my high priest group. He announced that his priesthood leader had assigned him to be our home teacher. I explained our lack of needs, assuring him we were fine. He responded



Above: Brother Kanaile’s faithful visits with his Aaronic priesthood companion became a much-anticipated event for our children.

Left: Brother Wagner was never condescending; he simply strengthened my understanding as though we were pursuing knowledge together.

emphatically: “Even a bishop needs a home teacher.”

It wasn’t long before I was very grateful for his assignment. Brother Kanaile’s regular visits with his Aaronic priesthood companion became a much-anticipated event for our children. He always shared a spiritual lesson, remembered birthdays or special events, and often brought a Hawaiian treat for our children. He became our children’s Hawaiian *tutu kane*, or “grandpa.”

Do I remember the specifics of each lesson he taught us? Not really, but I know he brought us the gospel message and taught our family the doctrine. I also don’t remember all of the special foods he shared or things he did. But I remember his prayers and the encouragement I felt as a young bishop. I am grateful for this dedicated home teacher and what he did to help our family. He was right: even a bishop needs a home teacher.

Jan Felix, Utah, USA

Making Time

My father was baptized in his 20s but soon after fell away from the Church. Although he taught me much over the years, the one thing he was unable to teach me was how to be a priesthood holder. That fell to our home teacher, Brother Logan.

Brother Logan was one of the most Christlike people I’d ever known, and he was sincere in fulfilling his priesthood



BE A REAL SHEPHERD

“Home teaching is not to be undertaken casually. A home teaching call is to be

accepted as if extended to you personally by the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“Know well those you are to home teach. . . .

“Above all, be a genuine friend to the individuals and families you teach. . . . A friend makes more than a dutiful visit each month. A friend is more concerned about helping people than getting credit. A friend cares. A friend loves. A friend listens, and a friend reaches out. . . .

“Do not settle for mediocrity in this great priesthood program of home teaching. Be an excellent home teacher in every facet of the work. Be a real shepherd of your flock.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), “To the Home Teachers of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 48, 50–51.

Being Steadfast

When I was growing up, home teachers and priesthood leaders regularly visited my mother, Eleonore, a divorced and less-active mother raising two often-disobedient boys. Many in our ward probably viewed their efforts as a lost cause. But even though they saw virtually no progress in nearly a decade of faithful service, they were “steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works” (Mosiah 5:15) toward my family.

When I needed some summer work, I helped Bishop Mingus, one of our home teachers, install an irrigation system on his property. Brother Bray, another of our home

responsibilities. Each month for seven years, he called my father and set up an appointment to visit with our family and share a spiritual message. He established a good friendship with my father. His dedication to serving, loving, and teaching our family never wavered, even when my father turned down his invitations to come to church.

At age eight, I was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church by Brother Logan, and he was present when I received the priesthood.

teachers, told us stories about trips he took and news from his family. I still have the F-15 fighter jet belt buckle Brother Bray gave me from one of his trips to a museum. He was a quiet man, but I knew he cared.

Their commitment to their priesthood duty changed my life; our early interactions paved the way to my reactivation, my mission, my temple marriage, and now my role as a priesthood holder, father, and husband. Through years of visits, they took me from one path that led to unhappiness and tribulation and gently eased me onto the straight and narrow

When I turned 14, my first assigned home teaching companion was Brother Logan. Every month he arranged his busy schedule to accommodate our home teaching. He continued to guide me in the ways of a priesthood holder and gave me opportunities to call and set up appointments, prepare lessons for the families we taught, and bear testimony of the truths of the gospel.

Years later, I served a full-time mission. About four months into my mission, I was shocked and



saddened to receive the news of Brother Logan's death. Now, when I look back, I realize that as a missionary I used many of the attributes and skills I developed as a home teacher. I am grateful to Brother Logan for that. However, the most important thing he gave me was the example of Christian discipleship he showed by the way he lived and carried out his priesthood responsibilities.

Trevor Alan Robertson, Utah, USA

way that has brought me happiness.

My experiences help me keep an eternal perspective about home teaching families that are struggling. I realize that it might take several years for us to see the fruits of our labors, but that doesn't make our efforts any less urgent. It takes time to prepare people for their reactivation in the Church. It is worth the effort, especially to the one it affects for all eternity—the lost sheep. I rejoice daily for the blessing of being brought back into the fold, in part through loyal home teachers.

Kristian Allee, Michigan, USA



Above: Our needs and desires had been in our home teacher's thoughts for several months. His thoughtfulness touched our family.

Left: Even though our home teachers saw virtually no progress in a decade of faithful service, they were "steadfast and immovable."

Remembering Our Needs

When we moved across the country with our two-month-old son, my husband and I needed all the help we could get. One of our biggest challenges was moving from a partially furnished apartment into an unfurnished one.

We were hard-pressed to find any affordable furniture, even at garage sales. We let our new home teachers and ward leaders know we were looking for furniture, and they helped us find inexpensive or free bookshelves, dressers, desks, and other furniture to fill our empty spaces and organize the clutter. We still needed a kitchen table, so we spent a little bit of money to buy an inexpensive card table and folding chairs. In our minds this was a temporary solution, but as time passed, it became permanent.

One day, out of the blue, our home teacher and his friend knocked on our door. They had brought us a sturdier table with four accompanying chairs. The table was a step up in size and stability from our little card table and folding chairs, and it fit just right in our apartment. They had found the set for free, so it didn't cost them or us anything.

Several months had passed since our home teacher said he would keep an eye out for a table for us, and he knew we had temporarily fixed the problem. Yet apparently our needs and desires had been in his thoughts the whole time. His thoughtfulness and vigilance in looking for months for a table brought more comfort to our home and touched our family. ■

Alysa Stewart, Illinois, USA

NOTES

1. President David O. McKay, *Priesthood Home Teaching Handbook*, rev. ed. (1967), ii–iii.
2. McKay, *Priesthood Home Teaching Handbook*, iii.