



Fortifying Our Family

BY MARSHA JOHNSON

As our oldest child approached high school age, our concern for our children increased when we considered the prevalence of peer pressure and social groups pushing agendas inconsistent with Church standards. I often thought about this, wondering how we could help our children better understand Church doctrines, particularly those concerning the family.

One day I realized that the answers we sought could be found in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”¹ I knew that if our children understood the proclamation, they could confidently defend the Lord’s definition of the family.

At family home evening, I presented a proposal to memorize the proclamation as a family. After some grumbling, everyone agreed.

Every Monday evening we had a lesson about a paragraph or sentence of the proclamation, followed by a memorization activity. Each morning during family scripture study we would recite all that we had memorized to that point.

It took almost a year, but we memorized the entire family proclamation together. Although this might not be possible for every family, it has proven a blessing for ours. True to our concerns, our children have been exposed to activities, debates, and friends that do not support the Lord’s view of the family. I am so grateful to know that they have the words of the Lord’s chosen servants when needed.

In addition to teaching my children, this process taught me some important lessons about developing faith in Christ as a family.

1. We’re Here for Each Other

At times one or more of us stumbled over the words we were trying to memorize. The rest of us were able to carry on the recitation until everyone was back on track.

In our individual faith-developing experiences, at times we may need to carry or be carried by our family, and that’s how it should be. As we experience trials of faith and even everyday life challenges, we have a built-in support network to rely on for strength.

2. Use It or Lose It

When we finished memorizing, we did not know what to do next. So we did nothing. After a couple of months we tried to recite the proclamation. Though we got through, it was painful: our memories were shaky. To regain and retain what we had learned, we decided to start reciting it each Sunday evening. This is a lot like our faith: we need to be actively involved in keeping our faith alive, or it will weaken from lack of use.

3. Hard Work Passes, but the Good Remains

As I reflected on the year it took to memorize the family proclamation, I could only remember a few of the memorization activities we did, despite all the time and effort we put into our study. The same was true for the rest of the family. Living the gospel requires a lot of hard work. In the end we may not remember all the specifics, but we still have the blessings we gain along the way.

4. Effort Brings Blessings

Our initial purpose for learning the proclamation as a family was to prepare our children with the knowledge they would need to respond appropriately when others challenged them on gospel principles. Although we were particularly concerned about challenges to the traditional views of the family, such as same-gender attraction, our study has blessed us in many ways, some of which were



THE FAMILY A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

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

¶ The Holy Spirit inspired the members of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles to issue this proclamation to the world. It is a message of love and hope for all people who are seeking the truth and the blessings of the Kingdom of God.

As the members of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles are inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are also inspired by the love and grace of our Heavenly Father. We are grateful for the love and grace of our Heavenly Father and for the love and grace of our Heavenly Mother.

We have determined to issue this proclamation to the world. We believe that this proclamation will help to bring about a greater understanding of the love and grace of our Heavenly Father and of the love and grace of our Heavenly Mother. We believe that this proclamation will help to bring about a greater understanding of the love and grace of our Heavenly Father and of the love and grace of our Heavenly Mother.

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unexpected. Most important of all, we have become closer and stronger as a family through this process.

5. Tenderness Over Temper

In 40-plus weeks of family home evenings, we experienced the full gamut of patience and frustration, joy and anger. We always learned lessons better and felt a greater sense of love when we were gentle and tender rather than impatient and grumpy. In the April 2007 general conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland spoke about how we ought to use our tongues for good. He said, “We must be so careful in speaking to a child. What we say or don’t say, how we say it and when is so very, very important in shaping a child’s view of himself or herself. But it is even more important in shaping that child’s faith in us and their faith in God.

Be constructive in your comments to a child—always.”²

The world is not likely to teach our children about God’s plan for families or to have faith in Jesus Christ. Nor can we expect the few hours of instruction received at church on Sundays to provide us with deep, abiding faith. Instruction must happen at home to be truly embedded in our hearts.

As the end of Joshua’s life was approaching, he called all Israel together to remind them of the great things the Lord had done for them. Joshua’s well-known invitation was to “choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15). We, like Joshua, can call our families together to teach them the Lord’s words and say, as Joshua did, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). ■

NOTES

1. See *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Tongue of Angels,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2007, 16–18.