



Questions

I have heard Church leaders say that those of us who come from dysfunctional homes can be “cycle breakers.” I want to build a life founded on righteous traditions, but I’m not sure how I can be someone different from what I’ve been shown and taught my whole life. Where do I start?

& Answers

The words of the living prophets have greatly helped me. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “You were taught and prepared for the circumstances you would personally encounter in mortality. . . . Your memory of premortal life would be kept from you to assure that it would be a valid test, but there would be guidance given to show you how to live.”¹ Knowing the Lord prepared me for my life’s most difficult experiences reminds me that He loves me deeply. When I seek the inspiration of the Spirit through prayer and righteous living, I receive guidance to treat my family in a loving and healthy manner.
Name withheld, Minnesota, USA

When I got married, I wanted my home to be different than the one I grew up in. After years of trying to build a strong family, I now realize that breaking a cycle is an ongoing task. These ideas have been helpful in my pursuit.

1. *Make the decision.* Some people don’t think about their behavior, they just continue the traditions of the home they came from. If there was yelling, they yell. If there was abuse, they abuse. We are not solely products of our environment: a loving Heavenly Father has given us the agency to make our own choices



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

and construct the environment we choose. Decide to make your home a place where the Spirit can dwell.

2. *Be specific.* It’s a good first step to say, “I want to be different,” but you also need to set specific objectives to work toward. For example, I never wanted to fight with my spouse the way I heard my parents fight. Personal attacks and dredging up incidents from years past were specific things I didn’t want in our marriage. Think of breaking the cycle like achieving any other goal: set a goal and then take specific steps to attain it. You will have to be willing to work at it, but I testify it’s worth every effort.

3. *Look for new examples.* Pay attention to those around you. There are good, healthy marriages that you can learn from. There are parents who discipline their children with love. You can learn from these



His Power to Heal
“Moral agency is a vital element in our Father in Heaven’s plan of happiness. He understood that some of His

spirit children would use that agency improperly, causing serious problems to others. Some would even violate sacred trust, such as a father or family member abusing an innocent child. Since our Heavenly Father is completely just, there has to be a way of overcoming the tragic consequences of such damaging use of agency for both the victim and the perpetrator. That secure healing comes through the power of the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to rectify that which is unjust. Faith in Jesus Christ and in His power to heal provides the abused with the means to overcome the terrible consequences of another’s unrighteous acts. When combined with complete repentance, the Atonement also affords the perpetrator a way to avoid the severe punishment the Lord has decreed for such acts.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 40.

Share Your Ideas

An upcoming Questions and Answers feature will focus on the following question:

I am a new convert and the only member of the Church in my family. How can I encourage my family to understand and respect my new values and beliefs without making them feel that I am rejecting them as my family?

If you'd like to contribute your ideas and experiences, please label them "New Convert" and follow the submission guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by July 20, 2012.

people. My friends and ward family have been a huge support for me.

4. *Turn to the Master Teacher.* The Savior has shown us the way in everything. Through scripture study I've received answers to many questions and learned from His perfect example of patience and love. In the story of Mary and Martha (see Luke 10:38–42), the Savior lovingly and gently corrected Martha, knowing her intent and responding accordingly. He was forgiving and merciful toward the soldiers who crucified Him. He endured our trials, sorrows, and challenges so we don't have to ever feel alone.

Name withheld, Idaho, USA

I come from a family in which the last three generations on my father's side have created a heartbreaking trail of damaged families and lives. Looking at the situation honestly has imbued me with a determination not to repeat the cycle of destruction I grew up with. I have found two principles to be particularly helpful:

First, set appropriate boundaries between yourself and family members who are still caught in the cycle. You can love and forgive and at the same time choose not to associate with those whose actions are incompatible with breaking the cycle.

Second, be patient with yourself. We are each given talents and gifts in this life. We are also given unique challenges to overcome. Heavenly Father knows my challenges. When I turn to Him, He helps me see that I am not a bad parent because I struggle with the same behaviors that my parents and other family members display. He loves me for fighting against those behaviors. Unlike the adversary, who teaches me that my family's dysfunction both defines and eternally limits me, my loving

Heavenly Father reveals to me the beautiful miracle of a life emerging from the ashes of sin. Name withheld, South Carolina, USA

The talk "You Know Enough" by Elder Neil L. Andersen² of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered me comfort during a time when I did not feel worthy or capable of feeling the happiness that the gospel, family, and eternal marriage bring. I had convinced myself that I was a product of my past and that change was impossible. I followed the patterns I had seen as a child because they felt normal. When healthy relationships progressed, the unfamiliar territory scared me and I pushed away. I rejected love and friendship because I was afraid they wouldn't last.

When I recognized that the Lord not only had a plan but had a plan for *me*, I began to have hope. I moved forward knowing that at least I knew what not to do. I found that as I exercised faith, the Lord provided. I made decisions out of faith instead of fear, and I began to succeed where I had previously failed. As I kept the commandments, I learned not only that I was a lovable and capable person, but that I could love others.

I have since married in the temple, and I know I can become the wife and mother the Lord wants me to be. Together my husband and I can build a home with righteous traditions founded on gospel principles. I have learned that we don't have all the answers in life, but with the gospel we have enough, and with faith in its teachings we can be happy. ■
Name withheld, Utah, USA

NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, "Truth Restored," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 78–79.
2. Neil L. Andersen, "You Know Enough," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 13–14.