




SUNDAY LESSONS

 This Month's Topic:
Marriage and Family

RECIPE

for a Happy Family

Here are nine ways you can strengthen your family.

By Mindy Anne Leavitt
 Church Magazines

As far as important doctrines within the gospel of Jesus Christ go, the family is definitely high on the list. You young women regularly recite your commitment “to strengthen home and family,”¹ you young men are invited to “make a list of ways you can help build a happy home,”² and both young men and young women are reminded: “Your family will be blessed as you do your part to strengthen it.”³

So what’s the best way to strengthen your family and help create a happy home? “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” has the answer! This important document describes why families are so important in Heavenly Father’s plan and what exactly we can do to strengthen our family relationships. It also explains exactly how we

can be happier in our families. There’s no secret recipe—just the basic principles of the gospel we’ve been taught all along: “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”⁴

There you have it—the simple formula for creating a happy family and improving your eternal family relationships. That’s not to say it doesn’t require work and effort on your part, however. But all the effort you put into strengthening your family will ultimately make you—and them—happier.

Here are some ideas on what these principles could look like when put into practice.

FAITH

- Participate in family and personal scripture study and family home evening.
- Make a goal with your family to better keep a commandment, such as the law of the fast or the law of tithing.
- Make plans to listen to the upcoming general conference or to study the previous general conference together as a family.

PRAYER

- Participate in family prayer.
- In your personal prayers, pray for each family member specifically, by name. Think about their needs as you pray for them.

REPENTANCE

- Say you're sorry; say it often. And mean it.
- Learn about the importance of Christ's Atonement and the sacrament together and the role they both play in the repentance process.

FORGIVENESS

- Be humble and recognize that everyone, even parents, makes mistakes.
- Remember what you love about those who've hurt or offended you.
- Pray for help in forgiving others.

YOUTH EXPERIENCES

We asked some youth how they practice these principles in their own families. Here's what they said about their experiences:

FAITH

I chose to arrange the next two family home evenings, focusing on faith. I started off by preparing the lessons and trying to learn the chords on the guitar for the songs we would sing.

The first lesson was on faith. I asked what we as a family could change to grow our faith. They replied, "Praying, studying scriptures, fasting, going to church," and so on. We agreed that there are many things you can do to grow your faith, but the most important thing is to actually do them. It's important that you act in order to strengthen your faith.

The second lesson was on spiritual gifts. We talked about what faith and spiritual gifts had to do with each other.

Our faith-themed family home evenings went really well. We improved some things in our family; we had fun and tried not to just get it over with. We felt the Spirit together as a family.

Riza S., age 16, Roskilde, Denmark

PRAYER

I decided to practice my faith by praying and asking God for help and guidance. At first I didn't realize the impact of my prayers, but after a few days I found that we had more peace at home.

But then my faith was challenged. My youngest brother was hurt and had to have immediate surgery, one of my friends was also hurt badly, and my mother got a sore throat with a high fever. All these horrible circumstances expelled the feelings of peace around me. I was very sad but continued to pray. My grandmother's favorite poem came to mind, which says that God knows all things better than we do and that we should trust Him. So I started to

practice my faith even more and do everything I could. Not much later my brother was able to leave the hospital. My friend was not hurt as badly as it had first appeared. My mother recovered.

Now when I pray for others, I pray with more focus and more faith than before. We should have faith in God, especially when believing in Him and His plans is hard, and never complain because He knows best.

Jarom K., age 18, Graz, Austria

REPENTANCE

I have realized how much repentance affects everything. For example, for some months I was committing sins and not repenting of them, and I was finding it difficult to break this cycle. But after speaking with the bishop and other close friends, I was able to use the repentance process and feel so much closer to God and feel happier again. In praying hard and spending lots of time reading my scriptures, I realized that I had to change how I was living some parts of my life. I realize now how much I have grown because of this. Through this experience I was able to get much closer to my mum and dad especially.

Although I still have temptations and still commit sins, I am able to use the Savior's Atonement to repent and

review how I have done every day and try to always want to improve. I will be forever grateful for the Atonement in my life.

Billy P., age 17, Ipswich, England

WORK

Since I consider family history a type of work, I decided to make my own family history book. So I made a compilation of all the pictures of the members of my family. I did that so that my kids and my great-grandchildren will be able to see how their ancestors looked. And while I was doing it, I felt so peaceful because I knew I wasn't doing it for myself, but I was also doing it for generations to come.

Glory S., age 18, Johannesburg, South Africa

Youth in South Africa created a video about how they applied the principle of work in their families. To watch their video, see this article at liahona.lds.org.

WHOLESOME RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

My first attempt at doing recreational activities with my siblings was rough, to say the least. But a turning point for me was a trip to the Blue Ridge Mountains. The leaves were every color, and the amusement park was fun, but moments of curt words, selfish actions, and



RESPECT

- Obey your parents.
- Don't speak badly or unkindly of anyone in your family.
- Look for the positive qualities you see in each family member. Share with them what you admire about them.

LOVE

- Pray for charity—the Savior's love—for the members of your family.
- Find ways to serve your family.
- Write notes of encouragement and love. Hide them in lunch boxes, purses, or wallets for your family members to find later.

COMPASSION

- Encourage family members to share their feelings and try to understand each other.
- Comfort each other through hard times and try to bear one another's burdens (see Mosiah 18:8-9).

WORK

- Offer to prepare a meal for the family.
- Help out with things around the house, such as mowing the lawn, weeding the garden, or cleaning windows.
- Help your younger siblings with their schoolwork.

WHOLESOME RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Help plan family outings, vacations, or activities your family might enjoy doing together.
- Go digital-less. Turn off the TV and other electronics while you're with your family.

teasing gone wrong often dampened the mood. Before we left, my sister and I hiked up a small hill and sat quietly as we listened to the nature around us. It was the first time in a while that we had sat without quarreling, quietly discussing the days ahead and our current struggles. The Spirit was present, bringing peace I had forgotten.

I started to try to go out of my way to talk to my siblings, ask them about their day, give them a hug—just be involved in their life. I helped my youngest, autistic brother with his homework. I helped my youngest sister make grammar flash cards and create silly rhymes to memorize the different parts of speech. On her next test she had improved by more than 20 points and received her highest test grade. The joy I felt from those moments was different and more profound than I had expected.

Being in a family can be hard, but in times like those it is all worth it. Those little moments lead to ones of fun, games, and laughter; and I have felt a new unity in my family. ■

Emily C., age 17, North Carolina, USA

NOTES

1. "Young Women Theme," *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2009), 3.
2. *Duty to God* (booklet, 2010), 80.
3. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011), 14.
4. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.

