

PUTTING Family First

I knew we couldn't keep up with our busy schedule much longer. What could we change?

By Krista Schmitz

It was a new week, and I looked at the family calendar with trepidation. How could we possibly fulfill all of the obligations we had scheduled?

I plunged in, trying my best to volunteer at the schools, get the children to their various sports and clubs, feed everyone around ever-tightening schedules, and get my early-morning seminary lesson prepared each day. My husband rushed around to get to work and to Church meetings, to visit ward members, and to coach soccer. We were trying to be anxiously engaged in good causes and to be active in the Church, but something was missing. Although many families can handle numerous activities, it wasn't working for us: the frenetic schedule was taking a toll on our family.

As I pondered this problem, I started to notice how often we had to tell our children no about things they wanted and needed from us. This bothered me, and I started to think about what could be done.

I turned to the scriptures. As I read the Book of Mormon, I came upon the sermon of King Benjamin in which he said, "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order" (Mosiah 4:27).

The prize we wanted was a happier, more unified family. We wanted less stress and more joy, but it seemed that we clearly were not on a path that led to these prizes.

We were diligent, but we were spinning our wheels. We were preparing *everything* as opposed to every *needful* thing. I prayed about our situation, but initially no answer came.

Life went on as usual. Callings needed attention, I felt the dishes had to be washed, and everyone required rides to their activities. As I prepared to teach seminary each day, I started to find the answers I sought from the wisdom of our modern prophets and leaders. I came upon an address by President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) encouraging the Saints to hold family home evening. He said: "In our time the Lord has offered his ageless program in new dress and it gives promise to return the world to sane living, to true family life, family interdependence. It is to return the father to his rightful place at the head of the family, to bring mother home from social life and employment, the children away from unlimited fun and frolic."¹

I realized that one of the first casualties of our busy lifestyle was regular scheduling of family home evening. Not long after, our bishop read a letter in sacrament meeting from the First Presidency reminding us to choose our activities wisely and not let the good things we do get in the way of home evening.

As my husband and I discussed this counsel, we

realized that a lot of our activities were fun but not needful and that we could benefit from trimming the excess. We made lists of our activities and put them in categories like “needful,” “not needful,” and “needs improvement.”

As we studied our lists, we were concerned about the feelings of our children. Most of the activities we considered cutting were things they were involved in, like sports and clubs. We decided to hold a family home evening and talk this over with the children. When we discussed the problem with the children, we were astonished to find out that they would much rather spend time with us than have us coach their teams or chair their clubs.

From this realization our “Family Club” was born.

Once we fulfilled our obligations to existing activities, we did not sign up for anything new. On nights when we have no Church responsibilities, my husband will come home from work and announce, “Tonight is Family Club!” and the children will hurry to get their homework and chores done so we can spend time together.

Our children like to engage in special projects, especially with their dad. One night they built a computer out

of scrap parts. Sometimes everyone will put on tool belts and fix something around the house. The point is that we have the time, energy, and desire to be together.

I also have more time to spend with the children and prepare more nutritious meals for the family. Family Club requires no running around, splitting our family among activities, or eating out. No one seems to miss our life of rushing around and fast food. We enjoy the time we spend together so much that the children no longer want to be so involved in extracurricular activities.

We have reinstated family home evening and daily family prayer. We also tidy up, do personal scripture study, and have family recreational activities. We understand that as the children get older, they will naturally have more activities. We will add them when it becomes needful, but until then, we are enjoying every minute of Family Club. ■

NOTE

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “Home: The Place to Save Society,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1975, 4.

