

PARENTS IN TRAINING

You can do four simple things right now to build a happy, faithful home in the future.



4 SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO:





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Imagine yourself 20 years from now. What will your future home be like? Can you picture it? Is there love there? Does the Spirit dwell within those walls? You have the opportunity now to work toward that personal vision of the home you want to have.

Now imagine your children. Are they strong in the gospel? Are they happy? What kind of parent are you?

It can be hard to look so far ahead. You're probably thinking, "What's the point in thinking about things like children and my future home when I'm not even finished with seminary or if I haven't even started it!"

These things are important now because the decisions you make today affect not only your future but also your children's future. If you want to teach your children how to be happy, you have to learn how to be happy now. If you want to teach in your home, you need to look at what you're putting into your head and your heart now.

While the thought of preparing to be a parent already might seem completely overwhelming, it doesn't have to be. Let me share four simple things you can do that could help you become the mom or dad you hope to be.

1.



DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

First, develop your relationship with Heavenly Father. You'll need to talk with Him through earnest, daily prayer, learn about Him through sincere scripture study, and show Him you love Him by keeping the commandments, following the *For the Strength of Youth* guidelines, and partaking of the sacrament carefully and thoughtfully. Then, as you develop that trust, that faith, and that testimony, you'll be converted to the truth that we have a Heavenly Father. And the promises you have made—and the blessings that He has promised—will seem more real than ever.

As you bring the Father to a prominent place in your life, you'll be more willing to pray not only for guidance but also for His love. This might not be easy at first, but as you experiment and call upon Him, you'll begin to recognize His love and guidance in your life, and your testimony of the gospel will continue to grow.



ASK YOURSELF:

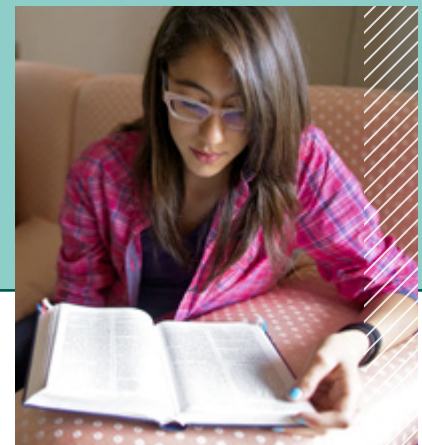
How will this make me a better parent?

If you develop a relationship with your Heavenly Father now, it will be easier to make Him a prominent part of your home when you have your own family. Since your testimony of Him will be tangible and strong, you'll be able to teach your children about Him and they'll feel that you truly do know that He lives. Your children will need to hear your testimony often—usually informally; bearing it often now will make it very natural to testify of God and truth with your future children throughout their lives. As Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “Within the walls of our own homes, we can and should bear pure testimony of the divinity and reality of the Father and the Son, of the great plan of happiness, and of the Restoration.”¹

You'll also be more prepared to raise children because your faith in Jesus Christ will grow and you will know you can rely on Him through the good times and the bad. Your children will need to hear you praying aloud with faith in Heavenly Father's plan. This trust you have developed will be apparent to your children as they hear you praying and testifying. So communicate with your Heavenly Father now and do it regularly. It will be a blessing to you for generations.

NOTE

1. David A. Bednar, “More Diligent and Concerned at Home,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 19.



2.



OBSERVE YOUR FAMILY

I have a suggestion for you. Write down the following sentences in your journal and think about what they mean:

- › What has my father or mother said or done that has changed me for the better?
- › How did he or she do it?
- › How has service among my family members strengthened family ties?
- › What brings my family happiness?
- › What kind of person do I want to be when I have children?
- › What are the best ways to communicate ideas clearly?

With these questions in mind, it's time to observe your family! What works and what doesn't? (Don't judge unrighteously, of course, but be objective and honest with yourself.)

Please don't expect your family to be perfect—because it will not be. It doesn't help anyone to dwell on faults and imperfections. Instead, focus on what your family does well and practice what you've learned from the answers to these questions. As you strive to become a constant source of goodness, you'll likely influence your family for the better. And as you recognize the good aspects of your family, you will have a strong foundation for establishing good patterns in your future home.



ASK YOURSELF:

How will this make me a better parent?

When you're older and you have your own home, you'll be the one who determines the atmosphere. It can be as peaceful as you decide to make it. It can be a place of love and forgiveness, a sanctuary of safety and trust, a place of God where the Spirit abounds. It can be all those things, but you'll be responsible for making it that way.

If you start planning for that atmosphere now, using your journal as a record, you'll go into parenthood with a list of ideals to guide your home. If you know now what you want your home to be like, then it will be much easier to make that home real when the time comes. No matter what kind of home you come from now, you can choose what kind of parent you will be in the future.

It doesn't help anyone to dwell on faults and imperfections. Instead, focus on what your family does well.

3.



FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO TEACH THE GOSPEL

You'll have opportunities to teach the gospel in both formal and informal settings. Sometimes you'll teach by example, and other times you'll be asked to give a talk in church or prepare a lesson for family home evening. So even without realizing it, you could be teaching the gospel every single day. What better way could you prepare to be a parent!

Try to find natural opportunities to talk about God with those around you without being preachy or overbearing. Before you know it, you'll find yourself talking about God very naturally in everyday conversation.

It's so important that you learn how to teach when you're young.



ASK YOURSELF:

How will this make me a better parent?

With children, teaching in the home happens every moment. Everything you do is going to teach something. Everything from the TV programs you watch to the kind of words you say. And you will always be an example, especially when your children are younger, because they will look to you to know what's wrong and what's right. That's why it's so important that you learn how to teach when you're young so you can be the teacher that your children will need you to be. Most often the parent sets the patterns of faith and obedience. Your children will absorb your attitudes early!

By bringing Heavenly Father's influence into everyday things and making that influence an understood part of your family rhythm, teaching the gospel will not seem strange or

awkward to your children. It will invite the Spirit into your home, and it will create a foundation for your children that will give them confidence in you and in the gospel.



4.



BE A CARING LISTENER

When I was a little girl and throughout my youth, my father would come into my room each night and ask me about my day. I can't remember much of what I said to him; I just remember that he would listen. He showed he cared enough about me to give his time to me. Because of that, I adored my father and trusted the things he said. Just by being kind and interested in me, he made me feel like I put the moon in the sky!

Learn to connect with people around you and give them your time. Some friends will need a joke or a compliment, while others will need advice, reassurance, or validation. And sometimes people just need you to listen. Develop the skill of awareness; notice the feelings of others. You'll need this sensitivity as you raise your future family.

You can practice by setting aside time for friends and family now, without electronic devices or distractions, for the sole purpose of giving them your attention. This doesn't mean a casual "hello" in the hallway or a "How are you?" on your way out the door. It means taking the time to ask sincere, thoughtful questions and listening to the answers. You'll be surprised how fast you'll bond with people and how much you'll find out about them.



Share Your Ideas

Share ideas on how to prepare to be a future parent and read the experiences of other youth at lds.org/go/parentNE816.

ASK YOURSELF:

How will this make me a better parent?

Even from a young age, you'll be able to tell that each of your children has a unique spirit and a distinct personality. That means that they will each have different needs and different ways of learning. In order to be able to teach your children individually and cater to their needs, you'll first need to connect with them and understand them. Making time to sit down with them and listening to them is a gift of yourself. Your friends today will treasure this gift and so will future children!

The more time you give them, the more they'll say. And the more you listen and hear, the more you'll understand them. Then when you trust them and they trust you, you can begin to teach. That's the most effective way to guide them toward paths of truth and light.

YOUR FUTURE STARTS NOW

Now go back to that future home and life you imagined and ask yourself the same questions you wrote down about your current home. There is much for you there. If you really want a happy, faithful home, now is the time to prepare. Now is the time to be your best self. **NE**