

OVERCOMING FAMILY CHALLENGES

Each family faces unique challenges, but there's hope for every situation. Find ideas from these three examples.





WHAT IF I COME FROM A FAMILY THAT'S NOT PERFECT? CAN I STILL HAVE A STRONG FAMILY IN THE FUTURE?

Because family is central to God's plan for each of us and to the Church, we hear a lot about families. We are taught to be good children and siblings and to prepare to be righteous spouses and parents. But what if you come from a family that isn't ideal? Because of your experiences, it may be hard to think you could ever have a family of your own where there's peace and happiness at home instead of anger and contention. Yet it's important not to give up hope. While no family is perfect, a foundation built on gospel principles can lead to joy in the family. When you start to wonder if happy family life is possible in your future, remember the example of Abraham.

Abraham's father was not a righteous man. He associated with men who had "turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments . . . , unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen, utterly [refusing] to hearken to [Abraham's] voice; for their hearts were set to do evil" (Abraham 1:5–6). Abraham's father even tried to have him killed.

But despite his father's example,

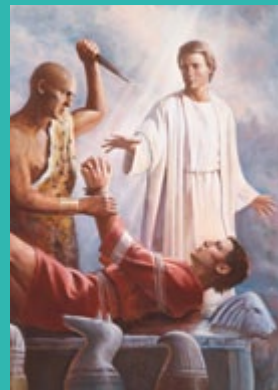
Abraham kept an eternal perspective about the family through his testimony of the gospel. He "saw that it was needful" (Abraham 1:1) for him to pursue a different life from that of his father. He knew "there was greater happiness and peace and rest for [him, so he] sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto [he] should be ordained to administer the same" as a priesthood holder (Abraham 1:2).

Even though Abraham's father was not a worthy priesthood holder, Abraham remained "a follower of righteousness" and desired "to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, . . . to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God" (Abraham 1:2).

Because Abraham stayed faithful to God, studied the gospel, kept the commandments, honored the priesthood, and remembered the plan of salvation, he was able to establish a righteous family of his own. He later became known as "the father of the faithful" and was the "founder of the covenant race" (Bible Dictionary, "Abraham")—a life that was possible because he made a choice to establish a family based on gospel principles.

LESSONS FROM ABRAHAM

- Abraham desired the kind of family life he knew could exist, even though he had been denied it growing up.
- He encouraged his father to live the gospel.
- He studied the gospel and kept the commandments so he could be a righteous priesthood holder, husband, and father.



LIKEN IT

- How does knowing the story of Abraham's family life—both as a son and later as a husband and father—influence you?
- Read about Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price (Abraham 1–3) and the Old Testament (Genesis 11–25), and list his traits. How did he stay strong in the gospel despite his family life growing up? How did he create a different future for his family than he received? How can you learn from his example?
- How do you think Abraham knew so much about the gospel and righteous family life? How can you find similar help and strength from Church teachings and from good examples around you?



WHAT IF MY PARENT REMARRIES AND WE ARE BLENDING TWO FAMILIES TOGETHER? HOW CAN WE GET ALONG?

Jonathan, Ben, Brian, Lara, Brittany, and Shannon became stepbrothers and stepsisters when their parents married. Three more children, Jeff, Katie, and Krista, later joined the mix. They share how they worked to unify their large, complex family.

THE BEST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

"We hope that when you attend meetings and see seemingly complete and happy families or hear someone speak of family ideals, you will feel glad to be part of a church that does focus on families and teaches of their central role in Heavenly Father's plan for the happiness of His children; that in the midst of world calamity and moral decay, we have the doctrine, authority, ordinances, and covenants that do hold out the best hope for the world, including for the future happiness of [the youth] and the families they will create."

Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy, "Faith, Fortitude, Fulfillment: A Message to Single Parents," *Ensign*, May 2012, 37–38.

New Parents

Love all family members. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10).

- I learned to focus on what both my father and stepfather could teach me and to let go of the things I had issues with. —*Brian*

- Loving new parents and siblings didn't mean I was less loyal to my other parents. My mom let us know it was good to accept my new stepmom and then set the example. —*Brittany*

- Don't be afraid to talk to your parents and your stepparents. Make the best of the situation. —*Krista*

New Siblings

Forming relationships with new siblings takes time and patience.

- We realized that we were all in this together, and we learned to accept each other as brothers and sisters. We try not to use the terms "step" or "half." —*Brian*

- Spend quality time together to build unity. We have a lot of fun hanging out together. —*Brittany*

- Learn to accept and appreciate each other, and try not to criticize. Talk about how you feel and forgive each other. —*Lara*

- Talk things out and don't let resentment build. Each member is important, and we need to support one another. —*Katie*

Working through Divorce Issues

You may feel resentment, confusion, or unnecessary fear that somehow you caused the divorce. Putting your faith in the Lord can help you through hard times.

- I had a hard time understanding how my parents could divorce if they loved me. Then I realized that life isn't always "squeaky-clean." Prayer and soul-searching helped me to accept my parents' divorce. —*Brian*

- Let go of anger. Forgiving others will give you peace, clarity of thought, and understanding. If you don't like some things about your family, make a plan to do things differently for your future family. —*Ben*

Support from Others

People around you can help you work through issues that come up.

- My grandparents were always there for me. I knew I could go to their home when I needed to get away for awhile. —*Jonathan*

- My Young Women leaders gave me time and understanding when I needed it. —*Lara*

- Talk to your parents, a leader, a friend, or an older sibling about how you feel. —*Shannon*

- At a family reunion with all my parents and brothers and sisters, I realized that they were a team, they loved us all, and that we would be OK. Regardless of the shape, size, or way our family came about, our hearts know one another and we are a family. —*Brittany*



3. WHAT DO I DO WHEN A PARENT IS HOSTILE TOWARD THE CHURCH?

Katie and Elizabeth have parents who are divorced and have joint custody. These young women have lived mostly with their mother, and though their father is active in the Church, their mother is openly hostile toward it and does not support their activity in the Church. The New Era met with them and asked them what advice they would have for other youth in a similar situation.

Elizabeth: You have to gain your own testimony.

Katie: Reading the scriptures prayerfully has helped me a ton.

Elizabeth: Conference talks help me. And *Mormon Messages* videos [see lds.org/go/122F]. I love watching *Mormon Messages* and *Mormon Messages for Youth* [see lds.org/go/122G].

Katie: Call upon Heavenly Father for help. I can't do it without praying for strength every day, to help me get through the day and to know what to do, to be in tune with

the Spirit so I know how to act when difficult circumstances come up.

Elizabeth: Never lower your standards, because if you do it for one occasion, then it's easier to bend for others. And I try to be patient with my mother.

Katie: What helps me the most is to look at her like a child of God. My dad gave me a priesthood blessing because I was having a hard time with my mom. In the blessing he said my mom is a daughter of God like me. It really helps to look at her like that. I'm going to help her as much as I can. I can't give up on her. I see her as Heavenly Father's child.

Elizabeth: If you keep going and endure through the trial, it makes you stronger.

Katie: If contention is in the room, just walk away. Don't invite any more of it than is already there.

Elizabeth: Always leave the door open. It's never too late for her to change.

Katie: Yeah, just keep that in mind, as hard as it is. It's never over.

Elizabeth: She can change.

Katie: Know that Heavenly Father knows the desires of your heart. So if you're trying your best to do what's right, though your parents aren't letting you go to church, He knows your heart.

Elizabeth: If your parents don't let you go to seminary, you can do it by yourself in the morning. I did last year; my seminary teacher gave me a book to study with. You can study your scriptures. You can always do something good. And whenever you *are* able be around members at Church activities and meetings, it lifts you up and makes you get through the next week.

Katie: Just know you're not the only one out there. There are others like you. **NE**



Read More

For ideas on what you can do in your youth to prepare to be a righteous spouse and parent, see "Your Current Life, Your Future Family" in the June 2012 *New Era* or online at lds.org/go/122H.



YOU ARE LOVED

"Youth whose parents are not members of the Church [and] other individuals in part-member families . . . are covenant members of God's eternal family, deeply loved by Him."

Handbook 2: Administering the Church (2010), 1.4.3.