



Family Responsibilities

Chapter 37

Responsibilities of the Parents

- What responsibilities do husbands and wives share in raising their children?

Each person has an important place in his or her family. Through prophets the Lord has explained how fathers, mothers, and children should behave and feel toward one another. As husbands, wives, and children, we need to learn what the Lord expects us to do to fulfill our purpose as a family. If we all do our part, we will be united eternally.

In the sacred responsibilities of parenthood, “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). They should work together to provide for the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of the family.

Some responsibilities must be shared by the husband and the wife. Parents should teach their children the gospel. The Lord warned that if parents do not teach their children about faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the sin will be upon the heads of the parents. Parents should also teach their children to pray and to obey the Lord’s commandments. (See D&C 68:25, 28.)

One of the best ways parents can teach their children is by example. Husbands and wives should show love and respect for each other and for their children by both actions and words. It is important to remember that each member of the family is a child of God. Parents should treat their children with love and respect, being firm but kind to them.

For teachers: As with chapter 36, be sensitive to the feelings of those who do not have ideal situations at home. Emphasize that with guidance from the Lord and help from family members and the Church, single parents can successfully raise their children.

Parents should understand that sometimes children will make wrong choices even after they have been taught the truth. When this happens, parents should not give up. They should continue to teach their children, to express love for them, to be good examples to them, and to fast and pray for them.

The Book of Mormon tells us how the prayers of a father helped a rebellious son return to the ways of the Lord. Alma the Younger had fallen away from the teachings of his righteous father, Alma, and had gone about seeking to destroy the Church. The father prayed with faith for his son. Alma the Younger was visited by an angel and repented of his evil way of living. He became a great leader of the Church. (See Mosiah 27:8–32.)

Parents can provide an atmosphere of reverence and respect in the home if they teach and guide their children with love. Parents should also provide happy experiences for their children.

- How can husbands and wives support each other in their roles? Where can single parents turn for support?

Responsibilities of the Father

- What positive examples have you seen of fathers raising their children?

“By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

A worthy father who is a member of the Church has the opportunity to hold the priesthood, making him the priesthood leader of his family. He should guide his family with humility and kindness rather than with force or cruelty. The scriptures teach that those who hold the priesthood should lead others by persuasion, gentleness, love, and kindness (see D&C 121:41–44; Ephesians 6:4).

The father shares the blessings of the priesthood with the members of his family. When a man holds the Melchizedek Priesthood, he can share these blessings by administering to the sick and giving special priesthood blessings. Under the direction of a presiding priesthood leader, he can bless babies, baptize, confirm, and perform priesthood

ordinations. He should set a good example for his family by keeping the commandments. He should also make sure the family prays together twice daily and holds family home evening.

The father should spend time with each child individually. He should teach his children correct principles, talk with them about their problems and concerns, and counsel them lovingly. Some good examples are found in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 1:14–3:25; Alma 36–42).

It is also the father's duty to provide for the physical needs of his family, making sure they have the necessary food, housing, clothing, and education. Even if he is unable to provide all the support himself, he does not give up the responsibility of the care of his family.

Responsibilities of the Mother

- What positive examples have you seen of mothers raising their children?

President David O. McKay said that motherhood is the noblest calling (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* [2003], 156). It is a sacred calling, a partnership with God in bringing His spirit children into the world. Bearing children is one of the greatest of all blessings. If there is no father in the home, the mother presides over the family.

President Boyd K. Packer praised women who were unable to have children of their own yet sought to care for others. He said: “When I speak of mothers, I speak not only of those women who have borne children, but also of those who have fostered children born to others, and of the many women who, without children of their own, have mothered the children of others” (*Mothers* [1977], 8).

Latter-day prophets have taught, “Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). A mother needs to spend time with her children and teach them the gospel. She should play and work with them so they can discover the world around them. She also needs to help her family know how to make the home a pleasant place to be. If she is warm and loving, she helps her children feel good about themselves.

The Book of Mormon describes a group of 2,000 young men who rose to greatness because of the teachings of their mothers (see Alma 53:16–23). Led by the prophet Helaman, they went into battle against their enemies. They had learned to be honest, brave, and trustworthy from their mothers. Their mothers also taught them that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them (see Alma 56:47). They all survived the battle. They expressed faith in the teachings of their mothers, saying, “We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (Alma 56:48). Every mother who has a testimony can have a profound effect on her children.

Responsibilities of the Children

- How do children help their parents build a happy home?

Children share with their parents the responsibilities of building a happy home. They should obey the commandments and cooperate with other family members. The Lord is not pleased when children quarrel (see Mosiah 4:14).

The Lord has commanded children to honor their parents. He said, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land” (Exodus 20:12). To honor parents means to love and respect them. It also means to obey them. The scriptures tell children to “obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1).

President Spencer W. Kimball said that children should learn to work and to share responsibilities in the home and yard. They should be given assignments to keep the house neat and clean. (See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 120.)

- What should children do to honor and respect their parents?
- What did your parents do that led you to honor and respect them?

Accepting Responsibilities Brings Blessings

- What can each member of the family do to make home a happy place?

A loving and happy family does not happen by accident. Each person in the family must do his or her part. The Lord has given

responsibilities to both parents and children. The scriptures teach that we must be thoughtful, cheerful, and considerate of others. When we speak, pray, sing, or work together, we can enjoy the blessings of harmony in our families. (See Colossians 3.)

- What are some traditions and practices that can make home a happy place?

Additional Scriptures and Other Sources

- Proverbs 22:6 (train up a child)
- Ephesians 6:1–3 (children are to obey parents)
- D&C 68:25–28; Ephesians 6:4 (responsibilities of parents)
- “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” (available on LDS.org and in many Church publications, including *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, page 102; *For the Strength of Youth* [item number 36550], page 44; and *True to the Faith* [item number 36863], pages 59–61)
- *Family Guidebook* (item number 31180)