

Lesson
44

Turn Your Heart

Purpose To inspire class members to learn about their ancestors and to keep their own records for posterity.

Preparation

1. Prayerfully study Malachi 4:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16.
2. Invite a class member or a special guest to display his or her journal or book of remembrance and read an entry to the class.
3. Materials needed:
 - a. Examples of different kinds of personal records (such as birth or marriage certificates, photographs, family histories, journals, books of remembrance, or scrapbooks).
 - b. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

Note to the teacher Everyone can do family history work. Help class members see that getting to know our family members, both past and present, can be enjoyable and rewarding.

**Suggested Lesson
Development**

Discovering Our Ancestors

Story and
discussion

Tell in your own words the following story:

In Fred and Marion’s home, a plaque hangs where everyone can see it. It is written in beautiful script and reads, “God is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation.”

The family loves the spiritual atmosphere the thought adds to their home, but cherishes even more the story behind it.

Marion’s ancestors were pioneers. She grew up hearing and reading stories about how her grandparents and great-grandparents loved the Lord, were converted to the gospel, and overcame trials on the journey to Utah.

When Marion married Fred, she was very interested in learning about his ancestors and heritage. But Fred’s mother had come from England as a young child with her parents, who were the only members of their families to join the Church. Fred’s mother had been so young when she came that she grew up with little knowledge about her grandparents. An occasional letter was the only link between families for many years.

Marion and Fred wrote to ask relatives in England for information about Fred’s mother’s grandparents and the old family home. They learned of a kind grandmother, very proper in her black satin dress and gold brooch, and of Sunday

visits to a tidy cottage where children had to remember their manners and sit quietly on the prickly horsehair-covered chairs. The family honored the Sabbath by attending church and refraining from any unnecessary labor.

One elderly cousin wrote of an inscription, written in an old style of lettering, that had hung above the fireplace of his parents' humble cottage. The inscription had remained vivid in his mind, although time had dimmed his recollection of other events.

Marion was excited when she read the letter and the words of the inscription. Here was a clue to help her identify with her husband's heritage. His great-grandparents' home had been one in which God had been revered, and seeds were planted there that would eventually prepare souls to accept the restored gospel.

This simple inscription has helped Marion and her family feel a closeness to Fred's ancestors. By preserving the inscription on a plaque, this family has developed a new perspective of reverence toward God and appreciation for their ancestors.

- Why is the inscription on the plaque so important to Fred and Marion's family? How does it help them feel closer to their ancestors?

Feeling the Spirit of Elijah

Scripture
discussion

Explain that the desire to learn about our ancestors is sometimes referred to as the Spirit of Elijah. Elijah was the last prophet before the time of Christ to hold the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which allows us to be sealed to our family members for eternity.

Have class members read and mark Malachi 4:5–6. Explain that this passage contains a prophecy that Elijah would return to the earth to restore the sealing power. This prophecy was fulfilled in 1836 when Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110:13–16).

- What does it mean to “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers”?

Explain that this means to seal us to all our ancestors—our “fathers”—and to all our posterity—our “children”—forever. Because of the sealing power of the priesthood and temple ordinances for the living and the dead, families can be bound together for eternity (note that temple ordinances for the dead will be discussed in the next lesson). Turning “the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” also refers to the love we feel for our ancestors when we learn about them.

Quotation

Have a class member read the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“There are millions across the world who are working on family history records. Why? Why are they doing it? I believe it is because they have been touched by the spirit of this work, a thing which we call the spirit of Elijah. It is a turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers” (“A Century of Family History Service,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1995, 62).

Chalkboard discussion

- How were the hearts of Fred, Marion, and their family turned to the hearts of their “fathers”?
- What do you know about your ancestors? How does your knowledge of your ancestors turn your heart to them?
- If you could sit down with your ancestors and talk with them, what would you want to know about them?
- What are some things you can do to learn more about your ancestors?

List class members’ answers on the chalkboard. You may want to share the following suggestions if class members do not mention them:

1. Ask your parents to tell you about your grandparents and great-grandparents.
2. Write letters to your grandparents asking them to tell you some stories about themselves, their children, their parents, or their grandparents. Ask them to include details such as dates, places, and names of people in the stories. When they send letters to you with stories and information, keep those letters in a safe place.
3. If there is a Church Family History Center™ near your home, go there with your family and use the computers and other resources to find the names of more of your ancestors.
4. Prepare a pedigree chart of your family (see the fourth enrichment activity).
5. If your ancestors are from a different country, read about the customs of that country and try some of them in family home evening.

Story

Read or have a class member read the following story:

Linda was a convert to the Church. She envied her friend’s Latter-day Saint pioneer heritage and the many pages of pedigrees, biographies, and stories he had in a book of family records, but she could see nothing very exciting or glamorous in learning about her own ancestors. Then her friend said something that made her look at her situation in a different light.

“Linda, I envy you! . . . My friend closed his book and continued, ‘All the work that’s in here was done by someone else. . . . But you—*you* get to start fresh and snoop around for yourself! Just think how close that will bring you to your mothers and fathers! You’ll really get to know them!’

“Knowing my mothers and fathers! I had never thought of it that personally before. Mothers and fathers don’t have to be glamorous or royal—they just have to be mine and I theirs! I repented of my envy and scurried home with the spirit of Elijah fluttering around me and some blank pedigree charts in my hand.

“I filled in the information for my parents and me but didn’t have much beyond names for my grandparents. Then I remembered some old boxes of family things my mother mentioned once. In the basement covered with dust and smelling like the 19th century, two cigar boxes lay wedged in behind some old tires. I had found treasure chests! I sat down on the cold concrete, surrounded by hardware and hoses and mold, and began to get acquainted with my ancestors. In those boxes I found a 1907 newspaper clipping of my great-grandfather’s obituary, my

granduncle's report card from Sweden in 1883, a 14-inch swatch of my grandmother's golden hair, an envelope with five generations of parents' names diagrammed on the back, lots of unlabeled photographs, and a small, brittle bundle of Swedish letters from my great-grandfather to my great-grandmother when they were courting in the 1860s. I offered a teary prayer of gratitude there in that damp, musty sanctuary, and I knew I was not alone in that prayer or that place.

"I studied those treasures in the months that followed. I pumped my mother for anything she could recall about her family. She helped me label photographs and sort out relationships. I studied old Swedish customs. I examined old maps of the areas where my family had lived. I listened to Swedish folk music. I even learned a little of the language. I discovered what kinds of people my ancestors really were: Gerda, my mother's mother—the sensitive, industrious, beautiful nurse; Carl Johan—the stationmaster with the flowing beard who would give advice and settle disputes like a lawyer; Maria Christina—the sturdy, stocky, devoted wife to Carl Johan and a diligent student of the scriptures; Agnes Sigrig Alfreda who had volunteered for the earliest experimental polio immunizations and was unfortunately left crippled; and my dear great-great-grandfather Anders who wrote in 1880, 'If I am now welcome I intend to travel to see you if the Lord will grant me health, and take with me my fishing yarn and the material for wooden clogs.' I loved them all as living people, as my parents" (Linda K. Hoffman, "Gerda, I Love You, or The Spirit of Elijah Is for Simple Folk Too" *New Era*, Aug. 1976, 28–30).

Keeping Personal Records

Quotation

Explain that in addition to learning about our ancestors, we should keep personal records so our family members will be able to learn about us in the future. It will be difficult for future generations to turn their hearts to us if they know nothing about us.

Have a class member read the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball:

"We may think there is little of interest or importance in what we personally say or do—but it is remarkable how many of our families, as we pass on down the line, are interested in all that we do and all that we say. Each of us is important to those who are near and dear to us—and as our posterity read of our life's experiences, they, too, will come to know and love us. And in that glorious day when our families are together in the eternities, we will already be acquainted" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 5).

Discussion

- What would you like your children and grandchildren to know about you?
- What challenges do you think your children and grandchildren will have to face? How could knowing about you and your experiences help your children and grandchildren when they face these challenges?
- What kinds of records can we keep? (Answers may include birth certificates, photographs, journals, family records, and scrapbooks.)

Show the examples of different kinds of records.

- What things could you record in a journal to help your descendants love and remember you, even if they never knew you in this life? (Answers may include personal experiences and feelings, testimonies, difficulties, family events, missionary calls, joyful occasions, and funny things that happen to you.)

Quotation

Explain that journals do not need to be fancy. The words we write in them do not need to be fancy, either. But the things we write in our journals will come together to record memories that will be valuable to us and to our posterity. Even things that seem insignificant now, like the clothes we wear, the food we eat, and the things we do at school, may be important to us and to others in the future. Encourage class members to follow this counsel from President Kimball:

“Get a notebook, my young folks. . . . Begin today and write in it your goings and comings, your deepest thoughts, your achievements and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies” (“The Angels May Quote from It,” *New Era*, Oct. 1975, 5).

Journal presentation

Have the previously assigned class member or special guest display a journal or book of remembrance and read a personal entry that might be of interest to the group. Have this person also express his or her feelings about the importance of this record.

After this presentation, ask the assigned class member or special guest the following question:

- How has it helped you personally to keep this record?

Discussion

Explain that our records help our children and grandchildren, but they also help us personally. Then ask class members the following question:

- How can keeping a journal help us?

You may want to share the following suggestions if class members do not mention them:

1. We can remember our experiences by reading things we wrote in the past.
2. We can look back and see how we have changed.
3. We can write about our testimonies and about experiences and feelings that are difficult to share with other people.

Testimony

As appropriate, share an experience you have had with learning about your ancestors or with keeping personal records. Testify of the importance of turning our hearts to our “fathers” and to our “children.”

Encourage class members to do all they can to learn about their ancestors. Also encourage them to write consistently in a journal and to save important pieces of information in a book of remembrance, scrapbook, or file.

**Enrichment
Activities**

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. With class members, sing or read the words to “Genealogy” (*Children’s Songbook*, 94).
2. Have class members write a letter to the children they will have in the future. Encourage them to leave it unopened and in a safe place until they are married and have children.
3. If *Old Testament Video Presentations* (53224) is available, show “Marriage in the Covenant,” a six-minute segment. This segment is about temple marriage. It shows how our actions today affect our ancestors and our descendants. (Do not show this segment if you showed it during lesson 41.)
4. Give each class member a copy of the pedigree chart found on page 268. Encourage class members to complete the chart at home.

Pedigree Chart

Chart no. _____

No. 1 on this chart is the same as no. _____ on chart no. _____.

Mark boxes when ordinances are completed.

- B Baptized
- E Endowed
- SP Sealed to parents
- SS Sealed to spouse
- F Family Group Record exists for this couple
- C Children's ordinances completed

