

# Teaching the Gospel in the Home

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## Teaching Children with Kindness and Love

The Lord has commanded parents to teach the gospel to their children. He said:

“Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

“For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized.

“And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands.

“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:25–28).

Parents should teach with kindness and love, remembering the Apostle Paul’s counsel to “bring [their children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

## Family Scripture Study

We can become like our Heavenly Father and enjoy the kind of life He lives only by keeping the laws upon which that blessing is based (see D&C 130:20–21). Before we can live

by those laws, we must know what they are. "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" (D&C 131:6).

Jesus Christ is our leader and law-giver. He knows the way and the laws we must keep, and He has invited each of us to follow Him. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). To become like our Heavenly Father and return to Him, we must learn the teachings of Jesus and follow them. We have the scriptures to help us learn about the life, teachings, and commandments of Jesus Christ.

The four books that the Church accepts as scripture are the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. They explain the laws of the gospel and the standards by which we can measure all thoughts, actions, and teachings. They help us learn about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and give examples of people who had faith in God and kept His commandments.

Jesus has taught us to search and study the scriptures (see John 5:39; 3 Nephi 23:1; D&C 88:118).

Families should study the scriptures together regularly to learn and follow the teachings of the Lord. Parents should gather their families together at a regular time each day to read and discuss the scriptures. Each family member who can read should

have an opportunity to read from the scriptures.



A family member may offer a prayer before the scripture reading and ask Heavenly Father to bless each one to understand what is read and to gain a testimony of it. Families may want to have their family prayer following the scripture reading.

As families read and ponder the scriptures, they will want to become more like the Savior and will find greater happiness and peace in their lives.

## **Individual and Family Prayers**

Each of us must learn to talk to our Father in Heaven through prayer. He loves us and wants us to talk to Him. He wants us to thank Him for our blessings and ask for His help and guidance. He will help us when we ask. Most prayers are offered with our heads bowed and our eyes closed while we kneel, sit, or stand.

We need to remember four important principles when we pray:

1. We begin our prayers by speaking to our Father in Heaven: "Our Father in Heaven . . ."
2. We thank our Father in Heaven for the things He gives us: "We thank Thee . . ."
3. We ask Him for the help we need: "We ask Thee . . ."
4. We close our prayer in the name of the Savior: "In the name of Jesus Christ, amen."

Our prayers do not always have to follow all four of these steps, but having them in mind will help us learn to pray. We should always begin and end our prayers with the first and last steps but what we say in the middle will depend on what we feel is important. Sometimes we will want to spend most of our prayer thanking our Heavenly Father. At other times we may want to spend most of our prayer asking for His help.



## Individual Prayers

Each person should pray individually at least once each morning and evening. Parents should teach children to offer their personal prayers as soon as they begin to talk. Parents can teach children how to pray by kneeling with them and having them repeat one sentence at a time. Soon children will be able to offer their own prayers.

## Family Prayers

Every family should have daily family prayer. The whole family kneels together, and the head of the family offers the prayer or asks a family member to offer it. Everyone should have a regular opportunity to offer the prayer. Small children can take their turns with their parents helping them. Family prayer time is an excellent occasion for teaching children how to pray and for teaching such principles as faith in God, humility, and love.



## Special Prayers

Parents should teach their children that God is always ready to hear their prayers. In addition to their regular individual and family prayers, they can pray at any time they need special help or want to express thanks.

## Blessing the Food

Parents should see that family members learn to thank God for their food and ask Him to bless it before they eat. Each person, including young children, should take a turn offering the blessing. Offering a prayer for a blessing on the food helps parents and children learn to be thankful to our Heavenly Father.



## Family Home Evening

Family home evening is for everyone, including recently married couples, fathers and mothers with children, single parents with children, parents who have no children at home, single adults in home evening groups, and those who live alone or with roommates. Everyone, regardless of their circumstances, will be blessed by holding family home evenings.

The Church keeps Monday evenings free of other activities so families can be together for family home evening.



The First Presidency said: “We promise you great blessings if you will follow the Lord’s counsel and hold regular family home evenings. We pray constantly that parents in the Church will accept their responsibility to teach and exemplify gospel principles to their children. May God bless you to be diligent in this most important responsibility” (“Message from the First Presidency,” *Family Home Evening Resource Book* [1983], iv).

As patriarch of his family, the father presides at family home evening. In the absence of a father, the mother presides. Parents conduct or appoint a family member to conduct the home evening. They teach the lesson or delegate the teaching to children who are old enough to teach. Everyone who is old enough should have opportunities to participate. Younger children can help in such ways as leading music, quoting scriptures, answering questions, holding pictures, passing out refreshments, and praying.

A suggested outline for family home evening follows:

- Opening song (by the family)
- Opening prayer (by a family member)
- Poem or scripture reading (by a family member)
- Lesson (by the father, mother, or an older child)
- Activity (led by a family member and with all family members participating)
- Closing song (by the family)
- Closing prayer (by a family member)
- Refreshments

A family can hold home evening in many other ways. Any activity that brings the family together, strengthens their love for each other, helps them draw closer to Heavenly Father, and encourages them to live righteously can be a family home evening. Examples of such activities include reading the scriptures, discussing the gospel, sharing testimonies, doing a service project, singing together, going on a picnic, playing a family game, and hiking. All family home evenings should include prayer.

Family home evening lessons can be based on the scriptures; words of latter-day prophets, particularly general conference addresses; and personal experiences and testimonies. Many lessons should be centered on

the birth, life, teachings, and Atonement of the Savior. *Gospel Principles*, *Gospel Fundamentals*, *True to the Faith*, *For the Strength of Youth*, and Church magazines contain articles and other information on many subjects that could be part of family home evening lessons.

Suggested discussion topics for home evening follow:

- The plan of salvation
- The life and teachings of Jesus
- Repentance
- Prayer
- Fasting
- The Word of Wisdom
- The Lord's standard of morality
- The meaning of the sacrament
- Tithing
- Gratitude
- Honesty
- Reverence for God and respect for His creations
- Preparing for baptism, priesthood ordination, or marriage
- Preparing to enter the temple
- Reading the scriptures
- Keeping the Sabbath day holy
- Forgiving others
- Gaining and sharing a testimony
- Sharing the gospel with others

- Compiling family histories
- Understanding and accepting death
- Solving family problems
- Managing family finances
- Sharing family household work
- Appreciating and enjoying music

## Holidays and Special Occasions

Holidays and special occasions, such as Christmas; Easter; the anniversary of the restoration of the priesthood; conferences; departure of a family member for a mission; or the birth, baptism, or ordination of a family member, can be excellent opportunities to teach the truths of the gospel.

## Tithing and Offerings



The Lord has commanded His people to live the law of tithing and be worthy of the promised blessings (see Malachi 3:8–11).

An excellent time for parents to teach the law of tithing and offerings is

when they pay their own. Children are influenced by what they see their parents do. Children who receive an allowance should pay tithing on it. Each child could have three different containers for money: one for tithing, one for a mission, and one for spending money. Each time children receive money, they should learn to put 10 percent into the tithing bank first, then some amount into the mission bank, and the balance into the spending-money bank.

When children pay tithing, parents should teach them to fill out a tithing slip, put it into an envelope with the money, and give or send the envelope to a member of their bishopric or branch presidency. Families living in an isolated area should give tithing to their designated priesthood leader.

## Mealtime Discussions

Mealtimes can be good occasions for talking about the gospel. Small children like to ask and answer gospel questions. When they do not know the answers, the father or mother can give brief answers and teach the gospel. Not every mealtime needs to include a gospel discussion, but such a discussion two or three times a week can help the family learn the gospel.

## Bedtime Stories

Because most children love bedtime stories, they provide an excellent opportunity for teaching the gospel by telling or reading stories from the

scriptures, Church publications, or personal experiences. Stories about honesty, sharing, and kindness teach important gospel principles.

## Working Together



Many opportunities for teaching the gospel arise as families work together around the home. While cleaning the house or working in the yard or garden, for example, parents should be alert for opportunities to talk about the gospel. A child will often ask questions. Parents should always take time to give simple answers. Comments like “You are a good worker. I’m sure Heavenly Father is proud of you” or “Look at the beautiful clouds Heavenly Father has made” can give children a feeling of gratitude to our Heavenly Father and an assurance that He is real.

## Family Councils

Parents may call family members together in a family council. Families can use these councils to set family goals, resolve family problems, discuss finances, make plans, support

and strengthen each other, bear testimony, and pray for each other. A council may be held whenever needed. Parents may want to hold a family council each Sunday or in connection with family home evening. Respect for the opinions and feelings of others is essential to the success of family councils.



## Private Interviews

Many parents find that regular, private interviews with each child help them draw close to their children, encourage them, and teach them the gospel. Such interviews may be formal or informal and may be held often.



The parent should express love for and confidence in the child, and the child should have an opportunity to express his or her feelings about any subject, problem, or experience. The parent should listen carefully and should take the child's problems and confidences seriously. The parent and child may want to pray together. Problems arising from the interview that involve other family members could be handled in the next family home evening.

## Family Activities

Parents should often plan times to have the entire family do things together. Picnics, camping, family projects, home and yard work, swimming, hiking, and wholesome movies and other entertainment are a few of the many activities that families can enjoy together.

A family that enjoys activities together will feel greater love and harmony. Children will be more willing to listen to their parents and follow their advice when they feel close to them. Parents will be able to teach the gospel more effectively.

