

reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. 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. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

“We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

“We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

*See also* Family Home Evening; Marriage; Temples

## **Family History Work and Genealogy**

On April 3, 1836, the prophet Elijah came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple. He conferred upon them the sealing power of the priesthood, making it possible for families to be sealed throughout the generations. In conferring this power, he fulfilled the prophecy that the Lord would send him “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the

children, and the children to the fathers” (see D&C 110:14–16; see also Malachi 4:5–6).

Through family history work, you can participate in the continuing fulfillment of this prophecy. You can learn about your ancestors and increase your love for them. You can be inspired by their stories of courage and faith. You can pass that legacy on to your children.

These are lasting benefits that come from family history work, but they are not the principal reasons for the Church’s great effort to gather genealogical records. All of the Church’s family history endeavors are directed to the need to form a “welding link . . . between the fathers and the children” (D&C 128:18). This welding link is formed by the power of the priesthood, through sacred temple ordinances we receive in behalf of our ancestors.

### Redeeming the Dead

Many of Heavenly Father’s children have died without having the opportunity to receive the fulness of the gospel. In His mercy and infinite love, the Lord has prepared a way for them to gain a testimony of the gospel and receive the saving ordinances of the priesthood.

In the spirit world, the gospel is “preached to those who [have] died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets. These [are] taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and all other principles of the gospel that [are] necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (D&C 138:32–34).

Many in the spirit world embrace the gospel. However, they cannot receive priesthood ordinances for themselves because they do not have physical bodies. In holy temples, we have the privilege of receiving ordinances in their behalf. These ordinances include baptism, confirmation, Melchizedek

Priesthood ordination (for men), the endowment, the marriage sealing, and the sealing of children to parents. The Lord revealed this work to the Prophet Joseph Smith, restoring a practice that had been revealed to Christians shortly after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:29).

As you receive priesthood ordinances in behalf of those who have died, you become a savior on Mount Zion for them (see Obadiah 1:21). Your effort approaches the spirit of the Savior's atoning sacrifice—you perform a saving work for others that they cannot do for themselves.

### Your Responsibilities in Family History Work

In family history work, you have three basic responsibilities:

1. Receive the temple ordinances for yourself and help immediate family members receive them.
2. Hold a current temple recommend and attend the temple as frequently as circumstances allow.
3. Gather family history information so you can help your ancestors receive the blessings of the temple.

You can participate in temple and family history work, at least to some extent, regardless of where you live or what your circumstances are. While you probably will not be able to do everything, you can do something. The following ideas may help you get started:

- Record important details about your own life. Record your birth date and birthplace and the dates of your baptism and confirmation. Keep a personal journal to record the highlights of your life, including personal experiences that will strengthen the faith of your children and other future generations.
- Learn about your ancestors. Begin by recording information from your memory and from accessible

sources at home. Record the vital information you accurately remember or can find about siblings, parents, uncles and aunts, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Where possible, obtain copies of certificates or other documents that include this information. As you gather more information, you may want to search in other locations, such as public records. The local ward or branch may have a family history consultant who can help you. You may also want to visit the Church's official Web site for family history, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).

- As you identify your ancestors, use pedigree charts and family group forms to record the information you find. These forms are available on paper and also in Church-produced software programs, such as Personal Ancestral File.

When you have gathered the necessary information about your ancestors who have died without receiving the gospel, ensure that temple work is performed for them. Even if you do not live near enough to a temple for you and your family members to be able to do the ordinance work, you can submit ancestors' names to a temple so others can do the work for them. You may be able to visit a nearby family history center or consult with local ward or branch family history consultants to see how to do this.

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that there are "principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as . . . they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect" (D&C 128:15). Through your participation in family history work, you and your ancestors progress toward salvation.

*See also* Temples