

# FAMILY PRAYER, FAMILY SCRIPTURE STUDY, AND FAMILY HOME EVENING

LESSON  
**16**

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**Purpose** To encourage families to hold regular family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evening and to teach the gospel in each of these settings.

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**Preparation**

1. Consider ways you can apply the principles under “Your Responsibilities as a Teacher” (pages ix–xi in this manual).
2. Ponder the doctrines and principles outlined in the lesson’s bold headings. Throughout the week, think about ways to teach these doctrines and principles. Seek the guidance of the Spirit in deciding what you should emphasize to meet participants’ needs.
3. If the following materials are available, bring some or all of them to class. Prepare to display them as you discuss family home evening.
  - a. The scriptures.
  - b. *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (31106).
  - c. *Family Guidebook* (31180).
  - d. *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276) and *Family Home Evening Video Supplement 2* (53277).
  - e. *Gospel Principles* (31110).
  - f. Church magazines.
  - g. *Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (35448).
  - h. Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society manuals.
  - i. Class member study guides for Gospel Doctrine courses.
  - j. *For the Strength of Youth* (34285).
  - k. Church-produced scripture story books such as *Book of Mormon Stories* (35666).
  - l. The Gospel Art Picture Kit (34730).
4. If you use the review exercise on page 84, bring to class a piece of paper and a pen or pencil for each participant.

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## Suggested Lesson

### Development

**Family prayer and scripture study and family home evening must be high priorities for every Latter-day Saint family.**

Explain that in February 1999 the First Presidency sent a letter to members of the Church throughout the world. The letter included the following instruction:

“We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform” (First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999).

- Why is this counsel particularly important today?

Explain that this lesson discusses what parents can do to hold daily family prayer and scripture study and weekly family home evenings.

**Families receive great blessings when they pray together.**

Read 3 Nephi 18:21 with participants. Then share the following counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of the Church:

“Let every family in this Church have prayer together. Now, it is important to have individual prayer, but it is a wonderful thing to have family prayer. Pray to your Father in Heaven in faith. Pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can do nothing better for your children than to have them taking their turn in the family prayer, expressing gratitude for their blessings. If they do that while they are young, they will grow with a spirit of thanksgiving in their hearts” (“Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 5).

- What can families do to establish a habit of daily family prayer? What challenges have you encountered with holding daily family prayer, and how have you worked to resolve them?
- What can families do to make family prayer a meaningful time for them? (In addition to participants’ responses, share some or all of the following suggestions.)
  - a. Parents can take time before the prayer to ask if there is anything in particular for which the family should thank Heavenly Father or if there are any concerns they should remember in their prayer.
  - b. Parents can ensure that children are regularly given the opportunity to say the family prayer.
  - c. The family can remember to pray for Church leaders, missionaries, and family members who need special blessings.
  - d. Parents can use their prayers as a time to teach. For example, their expressions of gratitude can foster similar feelings in their children.
  - e. Parents can mention each of their children by name in their prayers, helping the children feel the love that their Heavenly Father and their earthly parents have for them.
- What blessings have you and your family received because of family prayer?

**Family scripture study helps families draw nearer to God.**

Write the following phrases on the chalkboard or read them aloud:

*Increased reverence*

*Increased respect and consideration*

*Less contention*

*The ability to counsel children in greater love and wisdom*

*More responsiveness to parents’ counsel*

*Increased righteousness*

*Abundant faith, hope, and charity*

*Peace, joy, and happiness*

Ask participants to ponder the following question without answering aloud:

- What could you do to bring these blessings more abundantly into your home?

Explain that President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency testified that these blessings can come more abundantly into our homes when we study the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon:

“I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 90; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 67).

Referring to President Romney’s promises, President Ezra Taft Benson, the 13th President of the Church, said: “These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

Invite participants to tell about blessings that have come to their families through family scripture study.

- What have you done to make family scripture study successful? What challenges have you encountered, and how have you worked to resolve them? (In addition to participants’ responses, share some or all of the following suggestions.)
  - a. Work together to set a time to study the scriptures as a family every day. This is often the hardest part of family scripture study. However, families can seek the guidance of the Spirit as they determine what will work best in their circumstances.
  - b. Consider establishing a certain amount of time or a specific number of verses, chapters, or pages to read each day.
  - c. If possible, see that each family member has access to a set of scriptures. Even children who cannot read will benefit from having their own scriptures. Parents could give scriptures to their children at baptisms, birthdays, or other special occasions. Or children could earn money to buy their own scriptures.
  - d. Take turns reading, helping younger children as needed. After reading a passage, review what has been covered and state it in a way that younger children will understand.
  - e. Have young children draw pictures of scripture stories. For example, a family could create a mural depicting Lehi’s vision of the tree of life.
  - f. Memorize favorite verses together.
  - g. Read scriptures that relate to special occasions such as Easter, Christmas, a baptism, a priesthood ordination, or a temple dedication.
  - h. Research a particular gospel topic together, using the Topical Guide or the Bible Dictionary.
  - i. Keep a family notebook for recording questions, goals, or impressions connected with the scripture reading.

Point out that if it becomes difficult to gather the family together for scripture study, parents should remember that their efforts may have a more lasting effect than they imagine. Sister Susan L. Warner, who served as second counselor in the Primary general presidency, said:

“In our family we have tried to hold early-morning scripture study. But we were often frustrated when one son complained and had to be coaxed out of bed. When he finally came, he would often put his head right down on the table. Years later, while serving his mission, he wrote home in a letter: ‘Thank you for teaching me the scriptures. I want you to know that all those times I acted like I was sleeping, I was really listening with my eyes closed’ ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 109; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 79).

### **Family home evening helps families fortify themselves against worldly influences.**

Explain that in 1915, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency instructed parents to begin holding a regular “Home Evening.” This was to be a time for parents to teach their families the principles of the gospel. The First Presidency wrote: “If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 4:339).

President Gordon B. Hinckley told of how his parents followed President Smith’s counsel:

“In 1915 President Joseph F. Smith asked the people of the Church to have family home evening. My father said we would do so, and so we would warm up the parlor where Mother’s grand piano stood and do what the President of the Church had asked.

“We were miserable performers as children. We could do all kinds of things together while playing, but for one of us to try to sing a solo before the others was like asking ice cream to stay hard on the kitchen stove. In the beginning, we would laugh and make cute remarks about one another’s performance. But our parents persisted. We sang together. We prayed together. We listened quietly while Mother read Bible and Book of Mormon stories. Father told us stories out of his memory. . . .

“Out of those simple little meetings, held in the parlor of our old home, came something indescribable and wonderful. Our love for our parents was strengthened. Our love for brothers and sisters was enhanced. Our love for the Lord was increased. An appreciation for simple goodness grew in our hearts. These wonderful things came about because our parents followed the counsel of the President of the Church. I have learned something tremendously significant out of that” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 211–12).

Explain that every President of the Church since President Joseph F. Smith has emphasized the importance of family home evening. Today the First Presidency has counseled families to hold family home evening every Monday night.

Point out that family home evening should always include family prayer and a lesson, which can be presented by a parent or one of the children. Parents can help younger children prepare and present lessons.

Explain that the Church has produced materials that can help families conduct successful family home evenings. Display the Church-produced materials that you have brought to class (see “Preparation,” item 3). Give special emphasis to the *Family Home Evening Resource Book*, which is a valuable tool for parents. This book is the Church’s main resource for helping families plan and conduct family home evenings. It includes lessons and ideas for activities.

- In addition to prayer and a lesson, what other activities can families include in family home evenings? (Answers may include playing games, reading the scriptures, singing hymns or songs, holding family councils, and eating treats.)
- How can parents use family home evening to help meet their family’s needs? (In addition to asking for participants’ ideas, share the following example.)

One father developed family home evening lessons by talking individually with his children. As he talked with his children, he would often ask questions about specific areas of concern, such as “What do the boys at school say about girls?” or “Does anyone ever talk about illegal drugs?” The answers the children gave helped him recognize what they needed to learn and discuss. He and his wife would then sit down together and plan lessons based on those needs. The children enjoyed sharing their ideas and were prepared to face real-life situations.

- What can parents do to encourage every family member to participate in family home evening?
- What blessings have come into your family as a result of holding family home evening?

### Conclusion

Emphasize that daily family prayer and scripture study and weekly family home evening will strengthen family relationships, fortify family members’ testimonies, and prepare family members to deal with life’s challenges.

As prompted by the Spirit, express your love for your family and testify of the truths discussed during this lesson and throughout the course.

Refer to pages 68–72 in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*. Encourage participants to review the doctrines and principles in this lesson by (1) following at least one of the suggestions in “Ideas for Application” and (2) reading the articles “The Blessings of Family Prayer,” by President Gordon B. Hinckley, and “Therefore I Was Taught,” by Elder L. Tom Perry. Point out that married couples can receive great benefits from reading and discussing the articles in the study guide together.

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### Additional Resource Material

#### Participating in wholesome recreational activities as a family

Explain that in addition to family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evening, wholesome recreational activities can help families develop strong bonds of love and unity. Parents should plan times when their family

can participate together in such activities. President Ezra Taft Benson counseled: “Build traditions of family vacations and trips and outings. These memories will never be forgotten by your children” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 51).

- What are the benefits of participating in recreational activities as a family?

Consider sharing the following suggestions or some of your own to prompt discussion:

- a. Family members who enjoy activities together will develop greater love and harmony.
  - b. They will have fun together and build relationships that will last throughout their lives.
  - c. Children will enjoy time with their parents and be more willing to listen to and follow their parents’ counsel.
- What memories do you have of family activities when you were a child? In what ways have these activities influenced your life?

Invite participants to share ideas for fun, interesting, and memorable family activities that have little or no cost.

### **Review of the lessons in part B of the Marriage and Family Relations course**

This lesson concludes part B of the Marriage and Family Relations course. If you have been teaching the entire course, consider using the following exercise:

Give each participant a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask participants to spend three minutes listing the doctrines and principles they remember from lessons 9 through 16 of this course. Have them underline the doctrines or principles that have been most meaningful to them. Encourage them to be prepared to talk about some of the items they underline. If they need help, use the table of contents on pages v–vii in this manual or the overview of the course on pages vii–viii in the *Marriage and Family Relations Participant’s Study Guide*.

After three minutes, ask each participant to read one item from his or her list and explain why it is particularly meaningful. Summarize participants’ insights on the chalkboard, and acknowledge the importance of each comment. Then share an insight of your own. As time permits, repeat this exercise.

Express your gratitude to those you teach for their participation in this course, and encourage them to continue to live according to the doctrines and principles they have discussed throughout the course. Also encourage them to read “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” periodically with their families and follow its counsel in their homes.