

# Lessons Learned from Fathers

*Fathers play an invaluable role in rearing their children and teaching them gospel principles. Here, some members share how fathers and father figures have made a difference in their lives through selfless acts of love and kindness.*



## Milkshakes and the Priesthood

When I turned 12 my dad ordained me to the office of a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood. Four months later we entered the chapel for my first priesthood session of general conference. In those days our stake watched conference on videotapes a few weeks after the sessions took place, so Dad and I sat together in front, close to the television. I had the conference edition of the *Ensign* sitting on my lap, and I tried following the speakers' words as they spoke, listening as intently as a 12-year-old boy can.

After the priesthood session Dad and I went out for milkshakes. While he drove, we talked about things we had heard and learned, and in the quiet restaurant, he taught me about the priesthood. He taught me my personal responsibilities as an Aaronic Priesthood holder and helped prepare me to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. He also helped me see the importance of attending my priesthood meetings. I was encouraged to listen to the leaders who guide the Church. Dad and I followed this pattern each time we attended the priesthood session together.

Over the years, as my younger brothers turned 12 and were ordained deacons, they joined my dad and me in our tradition of attending conference and going out for milkshakes afterward. It became a special time for the priesthood holders in our family to gain strength from each other and from leaders of the Church.

*Greg Burgoyne, Maryland*

## Nature's Testament

My earliest childhood memory is of my father exploring bluebells on a peaceful hillside with me. Father loved to share the beauty of his surroundings, so he and I often enjoyed the outdoors together when I was young and eager to discover what the Lord had created.

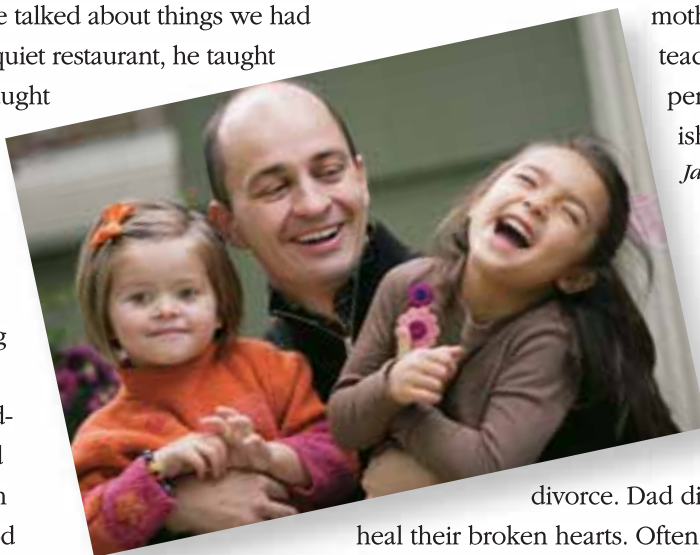
One day while exploring, my father showed me where a blackbird had nested. I remember his gentle reverence as, in breathless silence, he lifted the green branches of the tree so that we could peer in awe at the perfect blue eggs. The sense of wonder at Heavenly Father's creation filled my soul

as my father gently replaced the protective layer of leaves over the little nest.

Other days held more discoveries. The delicate primroses, the ripe and juicy blackberries, the silver-spined pike, and the magically transforming seasons all brought me an incredible sense of wonder and amazement at God's creations.

On these walks I developed a sense of humility, reverence, and respect for the Lord's handiwork, and I gained spiritual strength from learning about His creations. I also learned to recognize beauty in the people with whom I associate. I have become a more understanding wife,

mother, friend, daughter, and teacher because I can see each person individually as a cherished son or daughter of God.  
*Jacqueline Kirbyson, England*



## Grandpa's Help

When my young children needed a father's love in their life, my dad was there. I had just gone through a painful

divorce. Dad did the best he could to help heal their broken hearts. Often he took my son, Devin, to Scouting and other activities to provide opportunities for him to have good experiences. Dad picked up the girls from school and helped them get to their activities. Dad helped get my oldest daughter to her piano lessons and took all of the children swimming and sledding. My children's smiles during that time often resulted from the love he showed them.

Dad showed me what it means to have a father's love by the way he treated my children. I know I can ask my Father in Heaven for help and that He will be there when I need Him—just as Dad was there for my children.

*Shelly Dawn Alford, Colorado*

## Personal Development

Dad encouraged me in my youth to develop my talents and skills, including my abilities in sports and other physical activities. I remember playing basketball with him in the driveway, with him teaching me how to dribble, pass, and shoot. We would play catch in the backyard, and he taught me how to hit a baseball.





## FATHER'S LOVING ROLE

*"What a beautiful place this world will be when every father and mother see the importance of teaching their children the principles that will help them be happy and successful. Parents teach best when they lead by good example; govern their little ones with patience, kindness, and love unfeigned; and have the same spirit of love for children that Jesus exemplified."*

**Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Teach the Children," Ensign, May 1991, 80.**

When I was old enough, my parents signed me up for Little League, and my dad was often there to cheer me on. He supported me when I wrestled and played tennis, and though he was never much of a Scouter himself, he always encouraged me to be involved and go on bike rides, hikes, and camping trips. Additionally, we often worked in the yard as a family and always had our individual inside chores.

Though I may have not always appreciated it, I am grateful for Dad's example, direction, teaching, and overall encouragement during those important early years. These things have helped me become who I am today.

*Jonathan H. Westover, Utah*

### Dad's Work Ethic

There was probably only one thing my dad loved more than work, and that was getting me and the other kids to work alongside him. The excitement of building, cleaning, or painting would have long since faded away, and our minds would have become dull and our muscles sore, when we would hear Dad say, "Stick with me just a little longer, partner."

On the dairy farm we had to get up at 5:30 a.m. to do our chores. I could always count on Dad's cheery voice pulling me out of sleep, happily reporting a long list of

assignments to be completed that day. He would whistle through the foggy air as he walked to the milking parlor.

Dad's cheerfulness helped me learn not to dread work, but to see it as satisfying and rewarding. Most important, Dad taught me that work for the Lord deserves and requires enthusiasm, energy, creativity, dedication, and quality. He inspired me to be dedicated

to working for the Lord and His family.

*Norwin D. Burbidge, Washington*

### Meaning in Home and Visiting Teaching

My father was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer when he

was only 44. Our family was

devastated. The tumor in his brain made simple tasks and abilities, like using silverware and buttoning up his shirts, very difficult for him. I remember trying to hold back the tears one morning as I watched him struggle to spoon cereal into his mouth.

One rainy weekday afternoon I discovered Dad having difficulty dressing himself in his Sunday suit. He couldn't communicate very well, but I could see he was agitated. Finally I realized he was preparing to go home teaching. I worried that Dad would lose his balance and fall while out in such a condition, so I tried to discourage him from going. The family he was supposed to visit would surely understand, I told him. But he was determined, and go he did.



When Dad returned, his smile was radiant. His arms were full of fresh, homegrown plums—a gift from the family he had visited.

My father died soon after he made that visit. Whenever I don't feel like going visiting teaching, I think of my dad—in pain and unable to even speak coherently—still trying hard to fulfill his calling and show others how much he cared about them. That reminds me of the real purpose of visiting teaching. And I think to myself, “If Dad could do it, so can I.”

*Karina Fox Landward, Utah*

### The Kindness of an Uncle

The family I grew up in was not like some other families I knew. My dad wasn't really a good father figure for me, so I looked up to my uncle instead. Uncle Fred (name has been changed) was a wonderful example because he was tender and loving with his family. I was eager to follow his example of kindness.

When I was in Primary, my Uncle Fred took me on a special daddy-daughter date hosted by the ward. We danced, laughed, and had a wonderful time. Uncle Fred listened to me pass off all 13 Articles of Faith and was so proud of me! He was always kind and complimentary to me and showed an interest in how I was doing by making it a point to come talk to me often. He was my hero and my example in those years, and I looked up to him. I have always noticed, too, how well he treats his wife, my mother's sister. They have been a cherished example to me of a devoted married couple.

I am deeply grateful for the loving example of a good husband and father that I found in my uncle. He helped me see how happy family life can be. His loving compassion also told me I was worthy of time, respect, and patience from others and helped me recognize my eternal worth.

*Name Withheld*

### From Humble Beginnings

My grandfather was Faaolatane Sosaiete Siaunuua. Although he has long since passed away, the spiritual



## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Consider beginning the lesson by singing a song about fathers or a favorite hymn of your father or father figure. Read and discuss stories from the article.
2. Invite family members to share experiences of fathers or father figures that have made a difference in their lives through acts of love and kindness.
3. Consider writing a note or drawing a picture for your father or father figure. Express your gratitude and appreciation to him when you give him the note or picture.

traditions he practiced and taught me established my beliefs in God and built my faith.

My testimony and love of the scriptures took root in his small home in the little village of Sili in Western Samoa. In order to attend priests' morning prayer in the sanctuary, Grandpa had to cross a big river on foot, feeling his way around rocks and mosses. Gathering his family for evening prayer and Bible study was his way of showing devotion to God. At the end of his prayers he'd say, “Thy will be done, not our will.”

Grandpa knew who gave him strength, food, clothes, and his home, and he thanked God for them. Watching Grandpa lead family prayer, attend his prayer meetings, and read the Bible with his family planted a seed of faith in God in my heart as a young girl. It was from doing those things with him that I began to develop an understanding of God as someone to be worshipped and revered.

Although we weren't members of the Church then, Grandpa prepared my mind and heart for the blessings of the restored gospel. I'm forever grateful for Grandpa's influence, for I know it will continue to influence many more generations to come.

*Saofai Lowe, Hawaii*

### The Power of Prayer

No matter where we were or what we were doing, my dad found ways to teach his children the gospel. Some of my most vivid memories are of waking up in the middle of the night to find my dad kneeling in prayer. He knew where he could receive answers to questions he had or where to receive strength when he needed it. He taught his children how to pray and have faith to receive answers to their prayers. Because of his example, I know the awesome power of prayer to bless, heal, and strengthen. Now that my dad has passed from this life, I more fully appreciate that my Heavenly Father is there and that I was shown how to trust in the power to communicate with Him as His daughter.

*Emily Tree, Texas* ■