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Our Parental Duty to God and to the Rising Generation

One of a parent's most important responsibilities is to teach. As declared in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," "parents have a sacred duty . . . to teach [their children—sons and daughters] to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live."¹

I can still remember a powerful teaching moment from my mother in Brooklyn, New York, USA, 70 years ago. After my father had baptized me and while I was still in my wet baptismal clothes, my mother sat me down on a rusted metal folding chair in front of the baptismal font. She reviewed with me the importance of baptism by priesthood authority, the purpose of my baptismal covenant to take upon myself the name of Jesus Christ, and the law of obedience. Then she asked me how I felt. I remember telling her I had a warm feeling all over and that I would like to feel that way for the rest of my life.

My mother looked into my

eyes and taught me that in a few moments my father would lay his hands upon my head and would confirm me a member of The Church of Jesus Christ



of Latter-day Saints. He would confer upon me the gift of the Holy Ghost, she said, and if I remained worthy, true, and faithful to the commandments, the Holy Ghost would be with me to provide guidance and direction throughout my life. Although I had this experience with my mother many years ago, I have never forgotten that important *teaching moment*.

Do we as parents realize the power of teaching moments in the lives of our children? Do we recognize the urgency of our duty to help our children understand and live

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gospel principles? A foundation of faith and testimony will help our children not only endure life’s difficulties but also enjoy the fulness of Heavenly Father’s blessings.

Set in Order Your Own House

The purpose of the Lord’s work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Parents can help accomplish this great work by teaching their children “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” (D&C 68:25).



In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord rebuked Frederick G. Williams (1787–1842), a member of the First Presidency, for not teaching his children as he should:

“You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

“And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house” (D&C 93:42–43).

Do we have the courage to teach light and truth in our homes? Or are we experiencing affliction within our families because we are neglecting these duties? As we ponder and pray, we will be given spiritual strength and guidance to help us set our homes in order.

A House of Learning

The scriptures direct us to “establish . . . a house of learning” (D&C 88:119). Let me suggest several ways we as parents can fulfill this duty to God and to our children.

Focus the minds and hearts of children on the Savior. Faith and testimony must be centered in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. We should express to our children our own feelings about the Savior and share scriptures or experiences that have strengthened our testimony of Him. We should help them understand the significance of the Atonement and how it



For more information on changes to Personal Progress, visit PersonalProgress.lds.org and see Elaine S. Dalton, “What’s New in Personal Progress?” New Era, Jan. 2010, 32–35; and Heather Whittle, “Changing the World One Virtuous Woman at a Time,” Liahona and Ensign, Jan. 2010, 74–75.

can be a daily blessing in their lives.

Enos knew of Jesus Christ and His gospel because he “had often heard [his] father speak concerning eternal life” (Enos 1:3). The stripling warriors “had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (Alma 56:47). We take inspiration from these words of the Nephites: “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, *that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins*” (2 Nephi 25:26; emphasis added).

Lead and teach by example. In many ways, our actions speak louder than our words. President Brigham Young (1801–77) taught: “We should set [our children] an example that we wish them to imitate. Do we realize this? How often we see parents demand obedience, good behavior, kind words, pleasant looks, a sweet voice and a bright eye from a child or children when they themselves are full of bitterness and scolding! How inconsistent and unreasonable this is!”² Our children will notice

such inconsistencies in us and perhaps find justification for acting in similar ways.

We might well ask ourselves such questions as: Do our children see us faithfully fulfilling our Church callings, going to the temple regularly where possible, and serving others with Christlike concern and compassion? Do our actions tell them that gospel living is not a burden but rather a joy? Let us ensure that our examples help our children understand what

it means to build one's life on a foundation of faith and testimony.

Establish righteous patterns in the home. We need to take every opportunity to invite the Spirit of the Lord into our homes. One way we do this is by regularly practicing the “small things”—family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evening. As we make these things part of the pattern of our lives, they will make a big difference in the development of our children's testimonies. Let us remember the words of the Lord given through the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

Another important pattern to establish in the home is to live the Lord's standards regarding the use of media. With the advent of digital media has come increased access to degrading material, but we also have increased access to that which is beautiful and edifying. Let us encourage our children by precept and by example to seek after that which is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Encourage meaningful personal prayer and scripture study. So much of our children's growth in faith and testimony depends on their personal religious practices. We can help them set goals that can make prayer and scripture study a regular habit in their lives.

We will be more successful in making the scriptures a part of our children's lives if the scriptures are also a part of our lives. As we interact with our children, we can refer to the scriptures often in a variety of settings. Teaching moments can occur just about

REVISIONS TO *FULFILLING MY DUTY TO GOD:* FOR AARONIC PRIESTHOOD HOLDERS

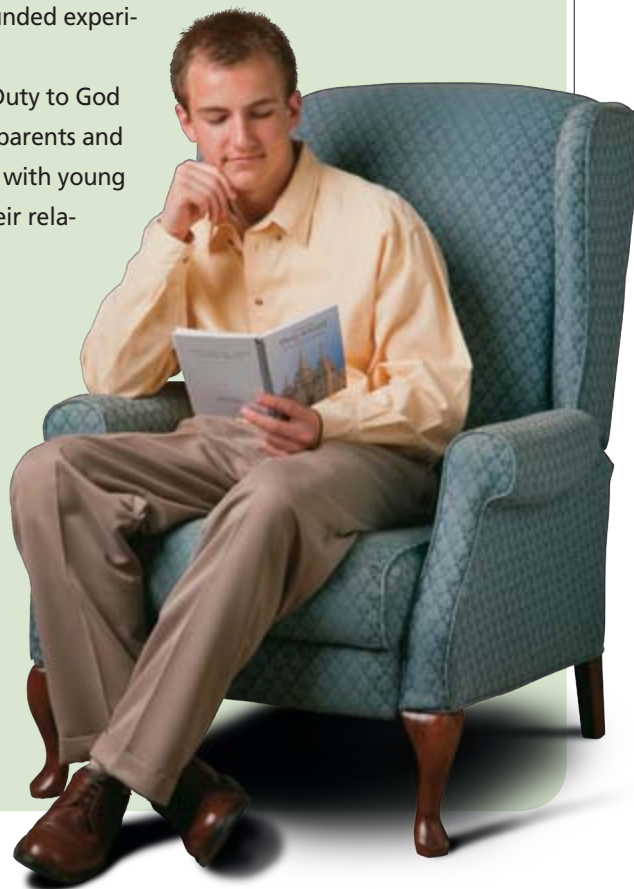
In an ongoing effort to strengthen the young men of the Church, the First Presidency has announced revisions to Duty to God.

For young men, fulfilling their duty to God is a lifelong journey—one that is more about becoming worthy fathers and priesthood holders than being recognized for specific activities and accomplishments. The revised version of Duty to God focuses on helping young men strengthen their testimonies and their relationship with God, learn to fulfill their priesthood duties, and live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*.

This version of Duty to God is based on Doctrine and Covenants 107:99: “Let every man learn his duty, and . . . act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.” It invites young men to engage in learning activities, make specific plans to act on what they have learned, and share their experiences with parents, other quorum members, and leaders. The revised version of Duty to God also provides activities relating to physical, educational, and social development.

These activities complement rather than compete with Scouting, where Scouting is available. Where Scouting is not available, Duty to God provides a well-rounded experience for young men.

This new version of Duty to God gives opportunities for parents and advisers to work closely with young men and strengthen their relationship with them.



anywhere as long as we are prepared to take advantage of them.

Mealtimes, for example, can provide a wonderful opportunity for parents and children to share thoughts and feelings. We can ask our children what they have been learning from their scripture study. What questions do they have about what they are reading? What are some of their favorite passages? We can share with them some of our favorites and tell them why these passages mean so much to us. We should include in our discussions the words of the living prophets and encourage our children to read these words as found in the Church magazines.

Use tools the Church provides to parents. Every good builder knows the value of good tools—they can make a seemingly overwhelming task much more manageable. The Church has provided many useful tools parents can use to help their children build a foundation of faith and testimony.

One recent example is the newly revised version of Duty to God for young men. Personal Progress, also recently revised, is a wonderful and powerful tool intended for young women. The benefits that our youth experience from Duty to God and Personal Progress will be significantly enhanced as parents participate and support them in their efforts.

For example, revisions to Duty to God and Personal Progress encourage youth to share with family members the goals, experiences, and feelings they are having as they make plans



For more information about Duty to God, see “New Duty to God Program Announced,” Liahona and Ensign, May 2010, 136; and visit DutyToGod.lds.org. This site includes an interactive version of the booklet, with resources to help young men better understand how to fulfill their duty to God.

and act on the things they are learning. Parents, this is a golden opportunity to have gospel conversations with your children that can enrich your relationship with them. The setting for such conversations does not need to be formal; some of the best opportunities for strengthening your children can occur during informal “conversations along the way.”³

Take time to become familiar with the revisions to Duty to God and Personal Progress and to support your sons and daughters in their goals. As you work alongside your sons and daughters and share with them your experiences, regularly ask them what they are learning and experiencing. Please make good use of these tools to solidify your children’s foundation of faith and testimony.

It is my hope that by following these suggestions, we as parents in the Church will be able to help our children lay a foundation of faith and testimony that will withstand whatever storms lie ahead. In the process, we ourselves will grow spiritually and develop bonds of love with our children that will last into eternity. The Lord has given us the charge to “bring up [our] children in light and truth” (D&C 93:40). May we respond to this charge with faith and determination to fulfill our duty to the rising generation. ■

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 340–41.
3. *Fulfilling My Duty to God: For Aaronic Priesthood Holders* (booklet, 2010), 98.