



*The gospel creates a unity of faith
with our Father, our Savior, and
our fellow believers.*

WHY IS UNITY IMPORTANT?

By Barbara A. Lewis

The story is told of a young boy who visited his uncle, a lumberjack. At the lumber camp, the boy saw a massive tree standing alone on the top of a hill. He enthusiastically pointed the tree out to his uncle, saying, “Look at that big tree! It will make a lot of good lumber, won’t it?”

His uncle looked down at the boy and shook his head. “No, son, that tree will not make a lot of good lumber. It might make a *lot* of lumber but not a lot of *good* lumber. When a tree grows off by itself, too many branches grow on it. Those branches produce knots when the tree is cut into lumber. The best lumber comes from trees that grow together in groves. The trees also grow taller and straighter when they grow together.”

Drawing a lesson from this story, Elder Henry D. Taylor (1903–87) of the Seventy said, “It is so with people. We become better individuals, more useful timber when we grow together rather than alone.”¹

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has members throughout the world. Just as different threads add beauty to a tapestry, Latter-day Saints of different ethnic groups, languages, and cultures unite in shared beliefs and covenants to form a harmonious pattern.² We seek to be unified at every level, both as a worldwide church and as individual families. After all, we are all part of God’s family.

United in Our Wards, Branches, and Communities

The Savior prayed for unity among His disciples: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21). The gospel creates a unity of faith with our Father, our Savior, and our fellow believers (see Ephesians 4:13). The Lord said at another time, “If ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27).

We have myriad opportunities to unite with our brothers and sisters in the Church. Harmony builds when visiting teachers and home teachers keep in loving contact with the people for whom they have responsibility. Bishoprics and quorum and auxiliary presidencies do their part as they watch over their flocks and work to bind them together. Unity grows when we serve together in peace, teach each other, and encourage one another.

In significant ways, unity is as important outside the Church as it is within. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled us to include people of other faiths in our circles of friendship. “Perhaps there has never been a more important time for neighbors all around the world to stand together for the common good of one another,” he said.³ As we unite with our neighbors, we create strong communities and help spread the Savior’s gospel throughout the world. We can work toward harmony in any community in which we find ourselves.

United in Our Families

Contention can spread like poison through families or any relationship, dividing us from those with whom we should be closest. Because the Spirit departs when discord erupts (see 3 Nephi 11:29), arguments can leave us floundering without the Lord’s help and guidance.⁴

Family members should feel safe to share honestly how they feel, and they should speak these feelings with patience and understanding. The family should be a secure place for members to be themselves.

“Unity, harmony, goodwill are virtues to be fostered and cherished in every home,” taught President David O. McKay (1873–1970).⁵ He also observed, “Slander is poison to the soul.”⁶ The home should be a place where family members

are confident that they will not be gossiped about or disparaged. In a united family, everyone respects each other.

We can strengthen family unity by living the simple principles of the gospel. Reading the scriptures together helps family members focus on the gospel and grow together. Praying together as a family creates within each individual a feeling of personal worth and power.

A family in Lodz, Poland, was investigating the gospel. The father did not share his family’s interest in the Church and remained resistant and hostile. One evening one of the missionaries explained the power of family prayer. He also taught that the father was to be honored as the head of the family. The missionaries invited the man to lead them in prayer. He had never prayed aloud before. All the family members bowed their heads and held their breath.

Two or three minutes passed in silence, and all the heads remained bowed. Finally, the father began to pray in halting words. His voice caught in his throat as he prayed



LOOKING INSIDE: CREATE HARMONY AND PEACE WITHIN

- Read and study the scriptures.
- Pray for inner peace.
- Write your feelings in your journal.
- Read inspiring books.
- Pick a positive character trait to develop. Practice it for a period of time until you think you have improved, and then pick another.
- Repent of any wrongdoings and forgive yourself.

for blessings upon each family member. All eyes became wet, and a spirit of peace filled the room. At the end of the prayer, the father wept. He had felt the confirming warmth of the Spirit. As a result of sincere prayer—and of each family member desiring the welfare of the others—the father became more united with his wife and children. He wanted to hear about the restored gospel.

Harmony within Ourselves

To be at peace with others, it is important to be at peace with ourselves. When we are at war with ourselves—when, for example, we know to do right but don't do it—we experience an internal disunity (see Romans 7:22–24; Mosiah 3:19). Such internal strife disrupts not only our personal well-being but also our feelings of harmony with others.

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that inner peace is restored through facing our problems and repenting. “A tranquil



LOOKING OUTSIDE: SEEK HARMONY IN INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

- Look for the good in each person.
- Imagine how you would feel in another's place.
- Think of your family (or group) as a team in which all of you contribute to the whole.
- Ask for forgiveness from anyone you have offended, and freely forgive others.
- Write kind, anonymous notes to family and friends.
- Recognize and thank others for their good efforts.
- Perform service for others.

conscience invites freedom from anguish, sorrow, guilt, shame, and self-condemnation,” he said. “It provides a foundation for happiness.”⁷

Satan would have us believe that when we make a mistake, it is too late to change things. However, we know that that is not the case. The Savior, who resolves estrangement from the Father, can resolve our estrangement from each other. We can pray and ask for forgiveness and repent. The Spirit will return. It is never too late; there is always a pathway home.

United by Forgiveness

When arguments occur and walls are erected that divide us, forgiveness can restore harmony. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught that “somehow forgiveness, with love and tolerance, accomplishes miracles that can happen in no other way.”⁸

Our Savior demonstrated the power of forgiveness throughout His sacred life. In the midst of the agony of the cross, He cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Because of His Atonement and the forgiveness it makes available, we can be made clean, through sincere repentance and obedience, and someday become fully united with Him.

Unity is a commandment of God. It is a law of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 105:3–5). As we live the gospel and love and serve others, we feel at one with our brothers and sisters and more in tune with the divine. In united harmony, we become “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). We become a many-hued fabric, divinely knit together—the family of our Eternal Father. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. See Henry D. Taylor, in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 54–55.
2. See “Diversity and Unity in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” *Gospel Topics*, topics.lds.org.
3. See M. Russell Ballard, “Doctrine of Inclusion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 36–38.
4. See James E. Faust, “What I Want My Son to Know before He Leaves on His Mission,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 41.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 44.
6. *Teachings: David O. McKay*, 43.
7. See Richard G. Scott, “Peace of Conscience and Peace of Mind,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 15–18.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 84.