

SERVING UP GENERAL CONFERENCE FOR FAMILY HOME EVENING

By Jessie Christensen

I knew I needed to give the idea of using conference talks for family home evening lessons a try.

When general conference rolled around in October 2013, I realized it was the weekend my children were scheduled to spend all day Saturday with their father, my ex-husband. On the one hand, I looked forward to a day of actually getting to hear the talks and ponder them in quiet peace, without the stress of trying to help three small children sit through four hours of talks in a somewhat reverent manner. On the other hand, I do take seriously the counsel to encourage our children to participate with us during conference.

Over the past decade since becoming a parent, I have sought to make watching or listening to general conference a significant family tradition. To help engage the children during the broadcasts, I've tried special foods, coloring packets, bingo, key-word activities, and going for scenic drives. Most commonly, I've simply required them to be in the room doing something quiet.

But what was I to do when my children weren't even going to be around for half of conference?

“Mom, He’s Breathing My Air!”

As I pondered this question during the days before conference, I kept getting the feeling that I should try using the talks for family home evening lessons during the following months. I resisted this feeling—my children are young, they might find the talks hard to understand, and I just wasn't sure there would be any kid-friendly subjects.

Then, Saturday morning the second talk during conference was from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, titled “General Conference: Strengthening Faith and Testimony.”¹ That was my answer—I knew I needed to give the idea of using talks for family home evening at least a try.

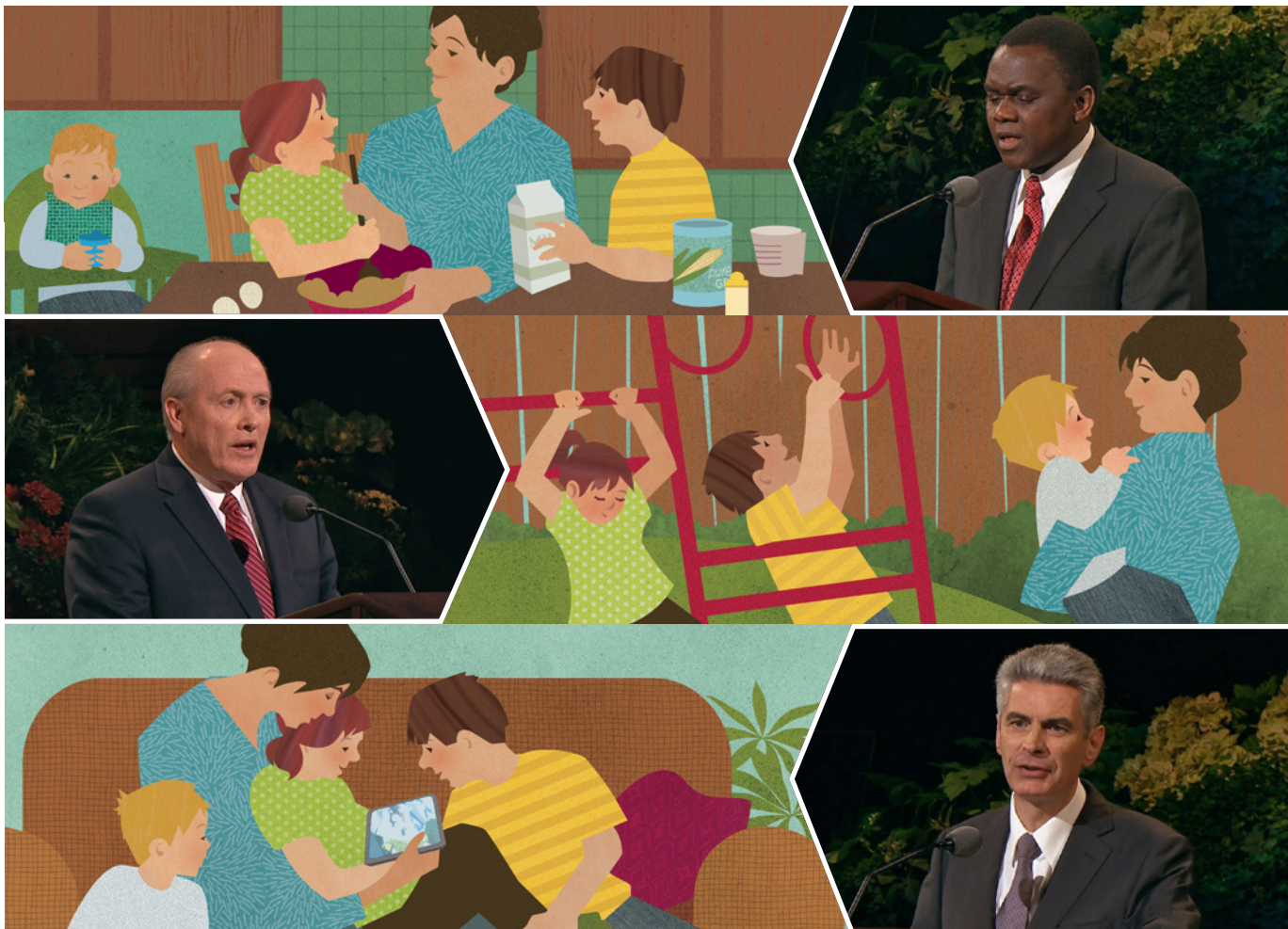
It could be a complete disaster. Most of the time our family home evenings resemble those described by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Sometimes Sister Bednar and I wondered if our efforts to do these spiritually essential things were worthwhile. Now and

then verses of scripture were read amid outbursts such as ‘He’s touching me!’ ‘Make him stop looking at me!’ ‘Mom, he’s breathing my air!’”²

Our results have been mostly in line with what Elder Bednar described—small miraculous moments of family bliss interspersed with total chaos. Using general conference talks has not completely transformed our family home evenings or my children, but I think the overall effect has been positive.

Zimbabwe Family Home Evening

At our house, family home evening lessons usually last less than 10 minutes. Starting with the talk by Elder Hales from October 2013 general conference, we have followed a similar outline for our lessons. First we find information about the particular General Authority or general officer giving the talk. The Church website has biographies for all these leaders, and we've also used Google to find background information about their home countries or anything else



mentioned in their talks. Then we discuss the content of the talk, possibly do some kind of activity, and watch the last few minutes of the talk to hear the speaker's conclusion and testimony.

Sometimes we have been pretty elaborate with our activities. Once we used material about Zimbabwe from the *Friend* to cook traditional food, read about a child from that country, and play a native game before studying a talk given by Elder Edward Dube of the Seventy.³ Sometimes we have kept things simple, such as when we studied "The Strength to Endure" by Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Presidency of the Seventy⁴ and did

some strength challenges in the backyard to learn about building our physical muscles. We've often found other resources online, such as when we studied "Ye Are No More Strangers" by Bishop Gérald Caussé, first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and watched the Mormon Messages video about bullying.⁵

Great Discussions on Gospel Topics

I had a few goals for this experiment: help our family study recent general conference talks; focus our family home evening lessons more on gospel topics; and become familiar with the different General Authorities and general officers of the Church. We've

had some great discussions about gospel topics, and I've realized that my children know more than I have given them credit for. Most important, I feel strengthened by the fact that I took on something that seemed challenging and stuck with it. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. See Robert D. Hales, "General Conference: Strengthening Faith and Testimony," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 6–8.
2. David A. Bednar, "More Diligent and Concerned at Home," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 19.
3. See the *Friend*, Mar. 2014, 14–17, and Edward Dube, "Look Ahead and Believe," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 15–17.
4. See Richard J. Maynes, "The Strength to Endure," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 79–81.
5. See Gérald Caussé, "Ye Are No More Strangers," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 49–51, and "Bullying—Stop It" (Mormon Messages video), [lds.org/go/bullyingE615](https://www.lds.org/go/bullyingE615).