

Lessons on Motherhood from Almost Sleeping through General Conference

I wouldn't get much from general conference with my toddlers running around. Would I?

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I only realized the lunacy of ordering a new notebook specifically for general conference when it arrived. Did I really expect to be able to take notes during any of the 10 hours of conference with my almost-two-year-old twins running around? They couldn't handle the sight of a pen not in their possession but couldn't be trusted with one yet either. I decided I'd at least write down the questions I had on my mind—after the girls were in bed, obviously—and try to listen for answers.

The night before general conference, as I wrote down my final question, “How can I be a better mother?” a distinct answer came to mind: “Go to the temple.”

“Huh,” I thought. “A pre-conference answer to a pre-conference question. Wasn't expecting that.” But the answer was clear.

The first morning of conference, I tried to listen, hoping for other answers or impressions. My husband works graveyard shifts, so I planned on him being asleep. Luckily my toddlers were entertained—at least for the first 45 minutes or so—by the beautiful music, our “special” breakfast (AKA just our regular breakfast, with a few extra blueberries, eaten on the living room floor instead of in high chairs), and a few simple activities (can you say “puffy stickers”?).



When the new two-hour block schedule was announced, I rejoiced, along with many mothers of young children. But I also felt the overwhelming responsibility of needing to teach my children the gospel better and more regularly at home. It felt like one more thing to add to the list of areas where I was already falling short in my efforts to be a good mother. At the same time, every reference in conference to temple work seemed directed at me and reinforced my earlier answer that I personally could be a better mother by attending the temple more.¹

The Message I Needed

When Sunday morning came, I woke up feeling exhausted and that even-my-skin-hurts kind of sick. I was sure I had the flu and that this wasn't just the result of staying up too late too many nights in a row, trying to squeeze every last ounce of "me time" in after my children went to sleep. (Spoiler: it wasn't the flu.) We still tuned in, physically even if not quite mentally, to the Sunday morning session, and I timed it just right to have my busy twins nap at the same time as the afternoon session. I then grabbed my notebook and lay down on the couch to enjoy the last session in silence (rookie mistake, I know).

When my eyes opened again, I fumbled for my cell phone to check the time. The session was almost over. I turned toward the TV just in time to hear President Nelson say, "Now let's turn to the topic of temples." I was grateful that I'd woken up at that very moment.

He continued: "We know that our time in the temple is crucial to our salvation and exaltation *and to that of our families*. . . .

" . . . Our need to be in the temple on a regular basis has never been greater. I plead with you to take a prayerful look at how you spend your time. Invest time in your future *and in that of your family*. If you have reasonable access to a temple, I urge you to find a way to make an appointment regularly with the Lord—to be in His holy house—then keep that appointment with exactness and joy. I promise you that the Lord will bring the miracles He knows you need as you make sacrifices to serve and worship in His temples."²



Revelation Meant Just for Me

Now, I don't recommend trying to watch general conference on a lack of sleep (or with young children running around, but that can't always be helped). But Heavenly Father understood my circumstances, and because He cares about me and my children, He taught me a few things after that memorable conference.

First, God provides divine instruction at general conference, but I didn't need to wait for conference to seek answers. Second, the way I was spending (read: wasting) my free time wasn't pleasing to the Lord—nor to my tired body. I was sacrificing sleep for fruitless pursuits instead of eternal ones (see Luke 21:34). Third, and perhaps most obvious, I needed to spend more time in the temple. My sacrifice of time—not away from my family but away from other distractions—would be the best thing for me to become a better mother and a better teacher to my children. ■

NOTES

1. See, for example, Ronald A. Rasband, "Be Not Troubled," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 18–21; Michelle D. Craig, "Divine Discontent," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 52–55.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 114; emphasis added.