

# Seven Sure-Fire Blessings from the Children and Youth Program

*This inspired new effort may be an adjustment, but enormous blessings await.*

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The new Children and Youth program is only three months old, but youth and parents all over the world are already seeing a difference in their lives. That's the promise to those who seek to become more like the Savior: He pours out blessings and gives rest to our souls (see Matthew 11:28–29).

As we patiently and lovingly help our children become more like Him, great things will happen in our hearts and homes.

## Blessing 1: God's Sustaining Help

Whether you're just getting started or feel like a seasoned pro, you're in the best possible hands. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared the following in the Children and Youth introductory guide for parents and leaders: "We love you. We have confidence in you. We promise that our Father in Heaven will continue to bless and sustain you as you lead and guide His children in faith."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, you can count on Heavenly Father's guiding and sustaining help as you learn and grow in this effort.



# 2

## Blessing 2: Goals Tailored to Your Children's Needs

"Home-centered, Church-supported" represents a big shift in thinking from the way many efforts in the Church have been carried out in the past.

Katie Gardner, a mother in Ohio, USA, admits that she struggled in the beginning. "I didn't like the new program at first," she says. "It was actually a little bit confusing. I thought, 'This isn't going to work.'"

But things changed once Katie met with other parents to discuss how things were going. Katie said, "One of the mothers talked about how much easier this made her life. The mother said, 'Now we're focusing on the goals in our family that our kids are actually interested in.'"

For Katie, that made a lot of sense. She could easily see how that might bless her own family. Katie's son had been trying to pass a hard test that would allow him to advance to the next grade. He'd already tried and failed three times. So, this became something that they worked on as a family.

"We kind of wrote out what we were going to do," Katie said. "And we worked on [the goals] for a couple months. He passed the test! That's when I realized this new program is all about working on the things that are important to your children—on the things that are going to help them succeed."



## Blessing 3: Greater Opportunities for Parental Involvement



Natalia, a young woman from Brazil, explains that her success in the program also begins at home. "My parents are essential to the process," she explains. "I had set some goals and told my mother of my difficulties. So we set some goals together, and from there she helped me a lot."

Joleno A. from Argentina feels the same way. "I know that if I have a doubt or I need help, I can go to my family and I can trust them with what is hard or what I need," he said.

# 3



## Blessing 4: Greater Opportunities for Leader Involvement

Church leaders and teachers are essential in this process. Even in a home with every family member strong in the gospel, leaders and teachers provide valuable strength, support, and instruction. How much more critical, then, becomes the help of leaders and teachers in families where a child or youth doesn't have full gospel support at home?

Natalia, who shared earlier how her parents are critical to her success, has also seen the importance of relying on her Church leaders. She remembers one time when she felt totally stuck in a goal. No matter how she and her parents tried to tackle the problem, Natalia couldn't move forward.

Then her bishop asked her to come in for an interview. "In the interview, the bishop asked about my goal," Natalia says. "I knew it was an inspiration because I hadn't told him I was blocked. And he really helped me to get through that problem."



## Blessing 5: Stronger Friendships, Quorums, and Classes

Many children and youth are the only Church members in their entire family. One example is Joao, a 16-year-old from Brazil. "My family are not members of the Church, so I ended up making friends here at church," Joao says. "These friends are like family to me now."

Friends and Church leaders have helped Joao feel accepted and part of a loving community. And he, in turn, has been a blessing to them. "If I were in the world, I would be lost," he says, "but the Church strengthens me more and more. And I also strengthen my friends. It's a constant exchange of testimonies, jokes, and fun."

Juan, a 15-year-old from Brazil, feels closer to the members in his quorum as he's spent time in the Children and Youth program. Not long ago, he and others organized a large soccer championship event with the young men in the area. They invited many youth who hadn't been out to church in a long time and even some nonmembers. The event was a resounding success. To Juan, it's important that everyone has a good time when they get together and that everybody has real friends they can rely on.

"I know that I am important to the members in my quorum, and they are important to me," he says. "If one day I'm sad, they will come and talk to me. If someday they're sad, I'll talk to them too. To help my neighbor is to love my neighbor. This is the process Jesus Christ taught. His love is incredible."

Here's another great example of this principle. A quorum from Ohio was planning their summer activities, when one of them mentioned that he hoped to attend film school. Maybe they could try shooting a movie, he suggested.

The idea caught on. In fact, this group decided to do not merely one activity but a whole series of them as they worked and learned together.

They had so much fun making the movie that they grew closer as a quorum. "The first thing we need to do is build unity," Spencer Bardsley, one of their adult leaders, said. "Once we come together, then we can start to explore the things that will help us come closer to the Savior."



## Blessing 6: Stronger Family Ties

Ideally, our family members are our closest friends. Children and Youth can help you and your children deepen those friendships.

Fernanda, a young woman from Brazil, has long enjoyed watching her father cook for a living. “Always, when my father was going to cook,” says Fernanda, “I was there watching him, and I still really like it.”

In Children and Youth, Fernanda set a goal to improve her own cooking skills. And who better to help her with this goal than her father?

“Working on this goal has brought me closer to my father,” Fernanda says. “Every time we cook, we get closer together because as I see him cooking, I help him. I’m not distracted by my cell phone. We’re getting a closer and closer relationship.”

Others have found the same truths. As family members spend time together and support one another, their families grow stronger.

## Blessing 7: Personal Revelation

Any effort in the Church ultimately aims to bring souls closer to God. Children and Youth is no different. The three elements of gospel learning, service and activities, and personal development combine in a powerful effort to help our children connect with God.

Martina, a young woman from Argentina, found herself drawing closer to God in ways she hadn’t even thought of before.

“I feel that I was able to make changes in my life that I did not even notice that I needed to make,” Martina said, after spending time in the Children and Youth program. “I noticed that I wanted to be better. I wanted to be like Jesus Christ. And I was able to notice those changes when I knelt and said to Heavenly Father, ‘What is it that you want me to change?’ Thanks to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, I can really be better.”

One young man from Brazil, Gustavo, age 17, has found a similar pattern he can follow with great success from here on out. “The new program has taught me that I can develop more like Christ if I plan my own life,” he says. “Personal revelation is fundamental.”

## Learn and Grow

As you guide the children and youth in your life through the three elements of gospel learning, service and activities, and personal development, this new and inspired effort will indeed help you and those you love to draw closer to Christ.

Simply keep your feet moving and allow God to guide your steps along the way. The future is going to be bright. ■

### NOTE

1. In *Children and Youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: An Introductory Guide for Parents and Leaders* (2019), inside front cover.