
Strengthen Home and Family

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The Lord is depending on you to assist in the exaltation of your eternal family.



Each Sunday, from Mongolia to Manchester to Mississippi, the young women of the Church repeat these inspired words: “We will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation” (“Young Women Theme,” *Young Women Personal Progress* [booklet, 2001], 5).

While this is the Young Women theme, it applies to all youth in the Church. I hope I can help you, my young brothers and sisters, understand how powerful your individual actions can be in strengthening your home and family, no matter what your

circumstances. I understand, for example, that many of you may be the only member of the Church in your family.

For the Strength of Youth reminds us that “being part of a family is a great blessing. . . . Not all families are the same, but each is important in Heavenly Father’s plan” ([pamphlet, 2001], 10).

All families need strengthening, from the ideal to the most troubled. That strengthening can come from *you*. In fact, in some families you may be the only source of spiritual strength. The Lord is depending on you to bring the blessings of the gospel to your family.

It is important to establish patterns of righteousness in your own life, which will enable you to set a good example for your family, whatever form your family may take.

The example of your righteous life will strengthen your family. President Hinckley gave the young women “a simple four-point program” in the general Young Women meeting last spring that will not only “assure your happiness” but will bless your family as well. He counseled each of us to “(1) pray, (2) study, (3) pay your tithing, and (4) attend your meetings” (“Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts Unceasingly,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 115).



Seeking the help of the Lord daily through prayer will bring great blessings to your family. Ask yourself: “Who in my family could benefit from my personal prayers?” “What could I do to support and encourage family prayer?”

As you personally study the scriptures, you will come to know the Savior and His teachings. From His example you will know how to love, serve, and forgive members of your family. Consider how you could share your understanding of the scriptures with your family.

On several occasions, President Hinckley has admonished us to “get all of the education you can” (*Liabona and Ensign*, May 2007, 116). Your education will benefit your family now and will surely bless your future family. What can you do now to plan and prepare for a good education?

President Hinckley taught us, “While tithing is paid with money, more importantly it is paid with faith” (*Liabona and Ensign*, May 2007,

117). Are you experiencing the blessings of paying tithing—with faith? As you obey this commandment, the Lord will “open . . . the windows of heaven” (Malachi 3:10) to bless you and your family.

How can attending your meetings—particularly sacrament meeting—bless you and your family? Regularly partaking of the sacrament will help you keep your baptismal covenant. As you live worthily and renew this covenant weekly, you will qualify for the guidance of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost will guide you and will teach you what you should do to bless your family.

As you commit to these patterns of righteousness, you will be blessed throughout your life and will develop the spiritual foundation from which you can strengthen your family by example. In 1 Timothy, Paul teaches us about example: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in

faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

The family section in *For the Strength of Youth* gives some great ways you can be “an example of the believers” in your own home:

“Be cheerful, helpful, and considerate of others. . . . Concern yourself with the needs of other family members. . . .

“Honor your parents by showing love and respect for them and by being obedient. . . . Participate in family activities and traditions, including family prayer, family home evenings, and family scripture reading. These traditions strengthen and unify families. . . .

“Strengthen your relationships with your brothers and sisters. They can become your closest friends” (10–11).

Example is often the best teacher. Who in your family could benefit from your example—a brother, a sister, your mom or dad?

Let me tell you an experience from my own life and how my brother’s patterns of righteousness and example resulted in our family being blessed eternally.

My brother and I were “born of goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1), who loved and made great sacrifices for the two of us, but our family had not been blessed with the sacred ordinances of the temple.

Many years ago on a day in late December, we received a letter from my brother, who was serving in the California North Mission. The outside of the envelope cautioned, “*Do not open until you are all together!!*”

As my father, mother, and I gathered to open his seven-page typewritten letter, we read his testimony of prayer. He taught us the doctrine of eternal families from the scriptures. We read his experiences of how fasting and prayer helped his investigators prepare to receive the ordinance of baptism. He assured us that our family too could be blessed through fasting and prayer. Then came his challenge: “The bishop of the Stanford Ward

spoke on a topic a couple of months ago which really hit home. . . . The bishop's talk made me stop and realize the goals I want to accomplish in life. Uppermost in my mind is the goal I want to achieve with my own family . . . that, of course, being sealed to you, Mom and Dad, for time and all eternity in the house of the Lord. I love you very much and want our family to be together in the eternities."

Then his closing words: "May the Lord guide you in this important decision and may you pray together as a family is my prayer."

As a teenager, I too had prayed for this blessing to come to my family. This letter now brought hope for my righteous desire.

The new year was an opportunity for our family to make some changes. In the many months that followed, we established family patterns of righteousness. We prayed together, studied about the ordinances of the temple, paid tithing, and attended our meetings regularly—as a family. Shortly after my brother returned from his mission, we were prepared to receive the ordinances of the temple. I knew the Lord had heard and answered our prayers as we surrounded the holy altar in the temple and were sealed as a family for time and all eternity.

Can you make a difference in your family? Yes, you can! I often wonder about my family's eternal progression if my brother had not written that powerful letter. His patterns of righteousness and example changed our lives.

Elder Robert D. Hales said: "If the example we have received from our parents was not good, it is our responsibility to break the cycle. . . . Each person can learn a better way and in so doing bless the lives of family members now and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow" ("How Will Our Children Remember Us?" *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 10).

Remember, "the family is central to



the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Eternal families are made up of individuals. "Do your part to build a happy home" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 10). Establish patterns of righteousness in your life. And be an

example of the believers. The Lord is depending on you to assist in the exaltation of your eternal family.

I know that Jesus Christ lives. He knows you and loves you. He has blessed me and my family, and I know He will bless you and yours. Of this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■