

Changes Help Balance Gospel Instruction at Home and at Church

As part of ongoing efforts to help Latter-day Saints “learn doctrine, strengthen faith, and foster greater personal worship,” President Russell M. Nelson announced adjustments to help balance and connect the unique and essential ways members worship and learn and live the Savior’s gospel both at church and at home.

Church leaders have announced changes to the Sunday meeting schedule, beginning in January 2019, in connection with the release of a new home-centered, Church-supported curriculum. These changes and others

build upon several prior initiatives the Church has set in motion in recent years, meant to help members focus their lives more fully on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and deepen faith in Them. These initiatives include a focus on more meaningful study of the gospel at home, honoring the Lord by keeping the Sabbath day holy, and caring for one another as the Savior would and as directed by the Spirit.

Meant to prepare the Lord’s people for His return, these changes are aimed at deepening individual conversion, explained Elder Quentin L. Cook of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as he outlined the changes in the Saturday morning session of general conference.

“We know the spiritual impact and the deep and lasting conversion that can be achieved in the home setting . . .,” he said. “Our purpose is to balance the Church and the home experiences in a way that will greatly increase faith and spirituality and deepen conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Adjustments at Home

Church leaders are inviting a greater focus on increased participation in personal and family religious observance in the home, including gospel study at home on Sunday and throughout the week and adjustments to home evening.

As both classroom and lab, the home is an essential center of gospel learning and living. Individual and family gospel study at home on Sunday and throughout the week provides opportunities to find spiritual strength on a daily basis and allows greater flexibility for personalized study and revelation. Relying solely on limited time at church for gospel instruction creates an imbalance that is unlikely to achieve the deep and lasting conversion necessary.

“We are each responsible for our individual spiritual growth,” said President Nelson. “And scriptures make it clear that parents have the primary responsibility to teach the doctrine to their children.”

Changes include the introduction of a new gospel study resource for individuals and families at home. Individuals and families can use the new *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*, if they desire, to guide their gospel study



experience outside of church. The new resource works with companion resources for Sunday School and Primary teachers to align Sunday lessons with home scripture study and suggestions for home evening.

In addition to encouraging gospel study, Church leaders renewed their invitation for all to participate on the Sabbath day—and throughout the week—in family councils, home evening, family history and temple work, ministering, personal worship, and joyful family time.

Materials sent to members and leaders explain that Church leaders encourage members to hold a home evening and gospel study on the Sabbath—or at other times as individuals and families choose. A family activity night could be held on Monday or at other times. To this end, leaders should continue to keep Monday evenings free from Church meetings and activities. However, time spent in home gospel study and activities for families and individuals is scheduled according to individual circumstances.

Worshipping God at church, participating in sacred ordinances there, and gathering together to teach one another and strengthen and serve each other are essential elements of deepening faith and personal conversion. Reducing the amount of time spent at church could be counterproductive unless individuals and families are intentional in strengthening their homes.

President Nelson taught: “As Latter-day Saints, we have become accustomed to thinking of ‘church’ as something that happens in our meetinghouses, supported by what happens at home. We need an adjustment to this pattern. It is time for a *home-centered*

Church, supported by what takes place inside our branch, ward, and stake buildings.”

Adjustments at Church

Adjustments to the Church experience are intended to support increased gospel learning and living at home. These changes include adjusting the weekly Sunday schedule to include:

- A 60-minute sacrament meeting,
- A 10-minute transition time,
- And a 50-minute class period, as outlined in the sample schedule below:

SUNDAY SCHEDULE BEGINNING JANUARY 2019	
60 minutes	Sacrament meeting
10 minutes	Transition to classes
50 minutes	Classes for adults; classes for youth; Primary

The 50-minute class period will include weekly Primary for children and will alternate weekly for youth and adults as follows:

- First and third Sundays: Sunday School.
- Second and fourth Sundays: priesthood quorums, Relief Society, and Young Women.
- Fifth Sundays: youth and adult meetings under the direction of the bishop.

If a Primary is large enough to separate into junior and senior Primary, leaders should reverse the following schedule for half of the children and adjust the time as necessary.

PRIMARY SCHEDULE BEGINNING JANUARY 2019	
25 minutes	Prayer, scripture or article of faith, talk (5 minutes). Singing time: Music that supports the scriptures studied in class (20 minutes)
5 minutes	Transition to classes
20 minutes	Classes: lesson from <i>Come, Follow Me—For Primary</i>

Curriculum Changes

This adjustment to meeting schedules works hand in hand with the newest addition to the Church’s *Come, Follow Me* curriculum. Beginning in January, this home-centered, Church-supported curriculum will harmonize what adult, youth, and children are learning in Sunday School and Primary classes, making it easier for families to study together at home during the week.

Instructions, lesson outlines, and resources can be found in:

- *Come, Follow Me—For Elders Quorum and Relief Society* (found in the November 2018 *Ensign* and *Liahona*)
- *Come, Follow Me—For Aaronic Priesthood Quorums*
- *Come, Follow Me—For Young Women*
- *Come, Follow Me—For Sunday School*
- *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*

Visit comefollowme.lds.org for more information.

Other key changes include the following:

- Teacher council meetings will be held quarterly rather than monthly.
- Elders quorum and Relief Society lesson schedules will no longer include a first-Sunday council meeting or a fourth-Sunday special topic. Lessons will focus on recent general conference messages.
- Singing time will replace sharing time. The *Outline for Sharing Time* will be discontinued.
- The Gospel Principles course will be discontinued. All members and interested friends will be invited to attend their respective adult or youth Sunday School class.
- Optional courses—such as those for strengthening marriage and family, temple preparation, missionary preparation, and family history—will not be held during Sunday class time. These courses may be taught at other times for individuals, families, or groups based on local needs and at the bishop’s discretion.

Purposes of These Changes

Church leaders are seeking to create a new balance and a greater connection between the unique strengths of the home and Church experiences with specific purposes in mind.

“There is so much more to this adjustment than just shortening the Sunday meetinghouse schedule . . . ,” said Elder Cook. “The purposes and blessings associated with this adjustment and other recent changes include the following:

- “Strengthening individuals and families through home-centered, Church-supported curriculum that contributes to joyful gospel living.
- “Honoring the Sabbath day, with a focus on the ordinance of the sacrament.
- “Helping all of Heavenly Father’s children on both sides of the veil through missionary work and receiving ordinances and covenants and blessings of the temple.”

For the announcement of these adjustments, see Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Remarks,” on page 6 of this

magazine; Quentin L. Cook, “Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” on page 8. For more information about these adjustments, visit sabbath.lds.org to find a letter from the First Presidency, answers to frequently asked questions, and additional resources that can help individuals and families honor the Sabbath. ■

