



Seeing Yourself in the Family Proclamation

While everyone's family circumstances are unique in some way, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" contains eternal principles that provide an ideal to aim for as we strive to reach our divine potential. The following pages include insights that can help us understand the inspired principles of the family proclamation better. If we

apply those principles in our circumstances to the best of our abilities, we will be blessed as we press forward toward eternal life.

1. Each of us is part of an eternal family with a divine purpose

No matter what our earthly family looks like, each of us is "a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents" who love us. As part of this eternal family, our divine purpose is to "progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life." (Unless otherwise noted, quotations come from "The Family: A Proclamation to the World.")

WE ALL HAVE A DIVINE NATURE AND DESTINY

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16–17).

WE ARE ALL CHILDREN OF HEAVENLY PARENTS

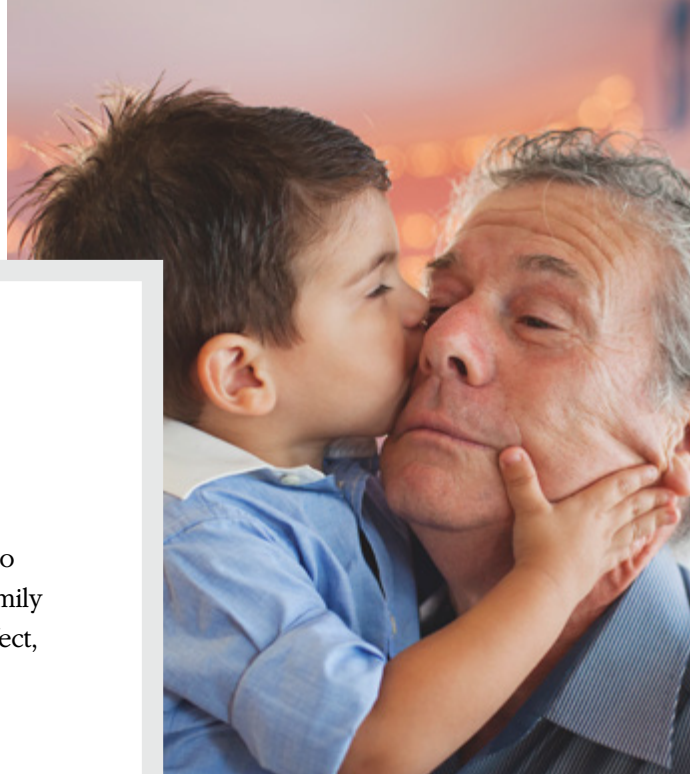
"We are children—but

in what a family and of what Parents! We can picture ourselves as we were, for longer than we can imagine, sons and daughters associating in our heavenly home with Parents who knew and loved us."

President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "The Family," *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 12.

2. Our mortal family helps us reach our eternal destiny

God gave us families to help us learn and grow as we seek to “progress toward perfection” and inherit eternal life. “The family is central to the Creator’s plan,” and though no family is perfect, God can help us progress with the family we have.



GOD GAVE US FAMILIES TO HELP US RETURN TO HIM

“Though earthly families are far from perfect, they give God’s children the best chance to be welcomed to the world with the only love on earth that comes close to what we felt in heaven—parental love. Families are also the best way to preserve and pass on moral virtues and true principles that are most likely to lead us back to God’s presence.”

President Henry B. Eyring, “Gathering the Family of God,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 20.

FAMILY FOSTERS PROGRESS

“Individual progression is fostered in the family, which is ‘central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.’ The home is to be God’s laboratory of love and service.”

President Russell M. Nelson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Salvation and Exaltation,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 8.



WE CAN LEARN NO MATTER OUR FAMILY SITUATION

“The reality is that a majority of Church members do not live in perfect family situations. I’m not sure *anyone* lives in that perfect ideal family. So why keep the emphasis? Because **family is our destiny**, and we are on this earth to learn the skills of strong family relationships, no matter what our own situation is. . . .

“. . . The Lord sees you. . . . If you trust your life to Him, His hand will guide you every step of the way until you are happy and at peace with all the desires of your heart.”

Sister Sharon Eubank, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, “A Letter to a Single Sister,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2019, 40, 41; bold added.

DISCOVER MORE

- Read what a single mother learned about striving to maintain a “forever family” with her children after a devastating divorce: visit [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/92014](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/92014).



MY FAMILY WAS ENOUGH FOR HIS PURPOSES

By Miranda Gaubatz, Utah, USA

My family is not what you would call the “ideal” family. My parents split when I had just turned 11, so I was raised by a hardworking, dedicated single mother. I felt like we stuck out like a sore thumb in sacrament meeting.

As a teenager, I remember sitting in a lesson on “The Family: a Proclamation to the World,” getting emotional as I listened to a youth leader testify of the family and coming to gain my own testimony that my little family was divinely approved and could provide everything I needed during this mortal existence.

Even with that knowledge, I dreaded taking the required Eternal Families class a few years later at Brigham Young University. I didn’t want to sit through class after class hearing about my “less-than-ideal” family. But my professor started our first class with this statement: “We preach the ideal but live in reality and rely on the Savior’s Atonement to make up the difference.”

I know that the family is central to Heavenly Father’s plan. Even families that are less than ideal, like I experienced as a teenager, can help us learn and grow. The Savior Himself was raised by an earthly stepfather. I’m so grateful that Jesus Christ can take our “not ideal” families and make them enough to fulfill His purposes for us.

3. “Family” can mean more than just parents and children

There are many family relationships that can be sacred stewardships. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, and others can be uniquely influential. “Extended families should lend support when needed.” Fostering these family connections can bring needed support and become prized relationships.

WE CAN BE BLESSED BY FAMILY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE VEIL

“When I say families, I don’t [just] mean our modern concept of Mom, Dad, and children. I use the term the way the Lord uses it, as a synonym for kindred or multigenerational families, because everyone has a family. Our Heavenly Father’s plan for His children centers on this kind of family—with children who draw strength from ancestors many generations back and parents who seek to bless their posterity for generations to come.”

Elder Bradley D. Foster of the Seventy, “Gathering, Healing, and Sealing Families,” given at the RootsTech Family History Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on Feb. 14, 2015.





YOU CAN BLESS YOUR FAMILY IN MANY ROLES

By Sister Sharon Eubank, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

The scriptures are full of examples of righteous men and women who made a significant difference in the lives of their extended family. Abraham changed Lot's life as his uncle. Joseph of Egypt saved his brothers and their families. As adults, sisters Mary and Martha blessed each other and their brother, Lazarus. Ruth, as a daughter-in-law, sustained Naomi and then was eternally blessed in return by Naomi's counsel. Elisabeth and Mary supported each other as cousins through the challenges surrounding their pregnancies. Even Zoram, who was not related by blood, was such a faithful support to Nephi that he and his children were adopted as if they were family. This broader view of family is so important to so many who have so much to give but feel cut off because they don't have the nuclear family they want.

DISCOVER MORE

- Read how one woman's connection to an ancestor through family history helped strengthen her through "The Power of Faith and Family Stories," *Ensign*, Sept. 2018, 34–37.

4. You can make a difference in starting or restoring an eternal family

"Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally." Unfortunately, sometimes marriages end, families fall apart, or the links in the chain of an eternal family are broken. Through these "sacred ordinances and covenants," it is "possible for individuals to return to the presence of God" regardless of their family circumstances. With God's help, making and keeping those sacred covenants to the best of your ability can help you create, repair, or strengthen your family, in hopes of one day uniting them eternally.

DO YOUR BEST; GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST

"My promise to you is one that a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once made to me. I had said to him that because of choices some in our extended family had made, I doubted that we could be together in the world to come. He said, as well as I can remember, 'You are worrying about the wrong problem. You just live worthy of the celestial kingdom, and the family arrangements will be more wonderful than you can imagine.'

I believe that he would extend that happy hope to any of us in mortality who have done all we can to qualify ourselves and our family members for eternal life. I know that Heavenly Father's plan is a plan of happiness. I testify that His plan makes it possible for each of us who has done the best we can to be sealed in a family forever."

President Henry B. Eyring, "A Home Where the Spirit of the Lord Dwells," *Ensign*, May 2019, 25.





IT CAN BEGIN (OR BEGIN AGAIN) WITH YOU!

“To you who have experienced the heartache of a divorce in your family or felt the agony of violated trust, please remember it begins again with you! One link in the chain of your generations may have been broken, but the other righteous links and what remains of the chain are nonetheless eternally important. You can add strength to your chain and perhaps even help to restore the broken links. That work will be accomplished one by one.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “A Welding Link” (worldwide devotional for young adults, Sept. 10, 2017), broadcasts .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



5. Marriage is a partnership that requires faith and prayer

The family proclamation affirms that husbands and wives “are obligated to help one another as equal partners.” But becoming true partners in marriage can be a challenge. Our upbringing, culture, education, financial circumstances, experiences, and more can affect how we approach relationships and how we manage our families. The proclamation teaches that “successful marriages and families” are established through faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, and other principles as we counsel and work together to meet our individual circumstances.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES ARE EQUAL PARTNERS

“Husbands and wives are equal partners. They have different but complementary responsibilities. The wife may bear children, which blesses the entire family. The husband may receive the priesthood, which blesses the entire family. But in family council, wives and husbands, as equal partners, make the most important decisions. They decide how the children will be taught and disciplined, how money will be spent, where they will live, and many other family decisions. These are made jointly after seeking guidance from the Lord. The goal is an eternal family.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Lord Is My Light,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 64.



WE MUST SEEK GUIDANCE FOR OUR OWN SPECIFIC FAMILY SITUATION

“We have a divine pattern to follow as outlined in ‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World,’ but we know that mortality can be complicated. . . .

“Once you know the Lord’s will, you can then move forward in faith to fulfill your individual purpose. One sister may be inspired to continue her education and attend medical school, allowing her to have significant impact on her patients and to advance medical research. For another sister, inspiration may lead her to forego a scholarship to a prestigious institution and instead begin a family much earlier than has become common in this generation, allowing her to make a significant and eternal impact on her children now.

“Is it possible for two similarly faithful women to receive such different responses to the same basic questions? Absolutely! What’s right for one woman may not be right for another. That’s why it is so important that we should not question each other’s choices or the inspiration behind them.”

President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Women of Dedication, Faith, Determination, and Action” (Brigham Young University Women’s Conference, May 1, 2015), womensconference.byu.edu.

DISCOVER MORE

Learn more about what we can do to strengthen our families:

- Find resources on ChurchofJesusChrist.org by selecting, in turn, “Living Life,” “Life Help,” and then “Family and Relationships.”
- Read “The Family,” by President Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 10–18.
- Read or watch “United in Accomplishing God’s Work,” by Jean B. Bingham, April 2020 general conference.

6. The potential for parenthood is part of God’s plan for becoming like Him

One of the ways we can become more like our heavenly parents is by experiencing parenthood ourselves. “The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife.” While getting married and having children doesn’t always happen according to our plan, that doesn’t mean it isn’t part of God’s plan. For many of us, preparing in faith and waiting on the Lord is an important part of becoming.

DON’T FEAR PARENTHOOD

“Some years ago, one of our young married daughters and her husband asked Sister Rasband and me a very important, life-influencing question: ‘Is it still safe and wise to bring children into this seemingly wicked and frightening world we live in?’

“. . . Our answer to them was a firm ‘Yes, it’s more than OK.’ . . .

“. . . Yes, we live in perilous times, but as we stay on the covenant path, we need not fear. I bless you that as you do so, you will not be troubled by the times in which we live or the troubles that come your way.”

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Be Not Troubled,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 18, 21.



SOMETIMES WE MUST WAIT IN FAITH

“Let me here say a word to console the feelings and hearts of all who belong to this church. Many of the sisters grieve because they are not blessed with offspring. . . . Be faithful, and if you are not blest with children in this time, you will be hereafter.”

President Brigham Young (1801–77), “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 28, 1860, 306.

INFERTILITY AND OUR WARD FAMILY

By John McMullin, Alberta, Canada

My wife, Gennie, and I always wanted a lot of kids. Always. But after a year of trying, we met the medical definition for infertility.

At first, there was a lot of prayer. Every night we would hold hands and ask Heavenly Father to bless us with the child we had prepared for our whole lives. We fasted every month, sometimes more. Every month we weren’t pregnant was even harder. Not only was there no child for us to love, it seemed there was no

answer to our prayers. It felt like God had heard us asking for what we had wanted our whole lives, and He had said no.

We began to question our worthiness. It was easy to believe He had kept His spirit children to be born into more faithful households.

Attending church became difficult. It was hard to hear about how others’ prayers had been answered, and how much Heavenly Father loved them.

Two things kept us going. First, we had made covenants to the Lord and to each other when we were sealed in the temple. We belonged with each other, and we were determined to be together both now and in the eternities.

The second was our ward family. We were blessed to have leaders





7. The power to create life is given, and guarded, by God

who knew infertility personally. Gennie had a ministering sister who also had experienced infertility and talked openly about the difficulties of being childless at church. We were struggling, but we knew others in our Church community had fought the same struggle.

We still don't have a lot of answers. We still don't have children, even after working with medical professionals. We don't know Heavenly Father's reasons, but because we have our covenants, and because we have a ward family that accepted and supported us, we've had the time to develop more patience and faith (see Hebrews 12:12–13).

We look forward to being parents. And while we wait for that happy day, we have a place to belong here in the Church.

DISCOVER MORE

- Learn more about planning and preparing to have a family. Read the Young Adults section of the June 2019 *Ensign*.
- Read "Planning Your Family according to God's Plan," in the June 2019 *Ensign* or YA Weekly.
- Learn how one couple found peace from stories of infertility in the Bible: visit ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/92020 (includes resources on financial and social support).

In the proclamation, the Lord's Apostles "affirm the sanctity of life." Because life is sacred, God has given commandments regarding the giving and taking of life. How we respect that power has far-reaching effects for good or evil on ourselves and on society.

SEXUAL INTIMACY HAS A DIVINE PURPOSE

"Physical intimacy is not only a symbolic union between a husband and a wife—the very uniting of their souls—but it is also symbolic of a shared relationship between them and their Father in Heaven. . . .

". . . At such moments we not only acknowledge His divinity but we quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves. One aspect of that divinity given to virtually all men and women is the use of His power to create . . . a child, your child—with eyes and ears and fingers and toes and a future of unspeakable grandeur. . . .

". . . You and I have been given something of that godliness, *but under the most serious and sacred of restrictions. The only control placed upon us is self-control—self-control born of respect for the divine sacramental power this gift represents.*"

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Personal Purity," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 77.

PROPER EXPRESSION OF SEXUAL INTIMACY BRINGS ETERNAL BLESSINGS

"Sexual relations are 'one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature.' Our proper expression of sexuality makes it possible for God's plan to unfold on earth and in the eternities, qualifying us to become like our Heavenly Father. God promises eternal life for the faithful



that includes eternal marriage, children, and all other blessings of an eternal family.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Ruth Lybbert Renlund, “The Divine Purposes of Sexual Intimacy,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2020, 16–17.

DISCOVER MORE

- In the August 2020 *Ensign*, learn more about God’s view of sexuality, including its divine purposes, its appropriate development, and how to teach it to children.
- Read “10 Scriptures about the Value of Human Life” *Ensign*, Mar. 2018 digital issue.

8. A parent’s responsibility is God-given

To help us become like Him, God has given many of us both the opportunity and the responsibility of parenthood. We are accountable to Him “for the discharge of these obligations.” But we can also count on His help in seeking happiness and success in marriage and family life as we strive to raise our children in love and righteousness and support them through their challenges.

WHY A PARENT’S ROLE IS SO IMPORTANT

“Our most important and powerful assignments are in the family. They are important because the family has the opportunity at the start of a child’s life to put feet firmly on the path home.”

President Henry B. Eyring, “Help Them on Their Way Home,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 23.





GOD WANTS HIS CHILDREN RAISED IN LOVE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Fortifying children to become sin-resistant is a task and a blessing for parents, grandparents, family members, teachers, and leaders. We each bear responsibility to help. . . .

“How to ‘bring up [our] children in light and truth’ may be a challenging question since it is individualized for each family and each child, but Heavenly Father has given universal guidelines that will help us. The Spirit will inspire us in the most effective ways we can spiritually inoculate our children.

“To begin, having a vision of the importance of this responsibility is essential. We must understand our—and their—divine identity and purpose before we can help our children see who they are and why they are here. We must help them know without question that they are sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father and that He has divine expectations of them. . . .

“. . . Helping children become sin-resistant is to begin at very early ages to lovingly infuse them with basic gospel doctrines and principles—from the scriptures, the Articles of Faith, the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, Primary songs, hymns, and our own personal testimonies—that will lead children to the Savior.”

Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary General President, “A Sin-Resistant Generation,”
Ensign, May 2017, 88.

OUR FAMILY NEEDS OUR SUPPORT

“Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we *love and support one another within the family.*”

President M. Russell Ballard, “What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 42; emphasis added.

DISCOVER MORE

- Find more about parenting on ChurchofJesusChrist.org by selecting, in turn, “Libraries,” “Gospel Library,” “Topics,” and then “Gospel Topics.”



9. We can stand up for God's plan for His family

From before the beginning of the world, it has been our role to promote the Father's plan for His family and defend it against disintegration from within and attacks from without. "We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family." Understanding why and how is essential.

WHY WE DEFEND MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

"The work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is ultimately concerned with preparing the children of God for the celestial kingdom, and most particularly its highest glory, exaltation or eternal life. That highest destiny is possible only through marriage for eternity. Eternal life includes the creative powers inherent in the combination of male and female—what modern revelation describes as the 'continuation of the seeds forever and ever.'

"In his talk to young adults, President Nelson taught, 'Abiding by God's laws will keep you safe as you progress

toward eventual exaltation," that is, to become like God, with the exalted life and divine potential of our Heavenly Parents. That is the destiny we desire for all we love."

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Two Great Commandments," *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 74.

WE CAN DEFEND THE FAMILY WITHOUT BEING OFFENSIVE

"When believers promote their positions in the public square, they should always be tolerant of the opinions and positions of those who do not share their beliefs.

Believers must always speak with love and show patience, understanding, and compassion toward their adversaries.

Christian believers are under command to love their neighbors (see Luke 10:27) and to forgive (see Matthew 18:21–35). They should also remember the Savior's teaching to 'bless them that curse [them], do good to them that hate [them], and pray for them which despitefully use [them], and persecute [them]' (Matthew 5:44)."

President Dallin H. Oaks, "Balancing Truth and Tolerance," *Ensign*, Feb. 2013, 30–31.

DISCOVER MORE

- Read about one couple's experience defending the family in "We Stood before Parliament" in this month's digital issue.

