

Home-centered Church Away from Home

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How could I help my children build a gospel foundation when I'd be away from home?

When President Russell M. Nelson described a home-centered Church during general conference in 2018, and when the Children and Youth program was announced in 2019, our family was excited.

As 2020 approached, however, we met a significant obstacle. Beginning in January, I had to leave home for a six-month deployment. I knew that my wife and I had a sacred responsibility to center gospel learning in our home for our five children, but I wondered how I could do my part while away from home.

Our children began brainstorming goals that would help them increase “in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52), just as the Savior did. My eight-year-old daughter told me one of her goals was to learn to cook with Daddy. With a broken heart, I had to redirect her goal toward something she could do for a while without my help. My sons wanted to become better at basketball and running—two things we love to do together. I encouraged them in their goal, knowing I would miss opportunities to help them. As a family, we prepared the best we could.

Family separation is always a trial, but the combination of technology and the direction of a living prophet allowed me to take part in our family's gospel learning after all.

We felt united, even when we were 10 time zones apart, as we studied *Come, Follow Me*. When time allowed, I would get on an



early-morning video chat during my family's evening scripture study and talk about the Book of Mormon chapters we had been studying. Over the phone, I would talk to my children about the Book of Mormon videos, and my wife and I would discuss ideas for family home evening.

Wanting to help my children with Children and Youth, I set my own goals and sent the children handwritten notes every week sharing my progress and asking them about their goals. Through regular phone calls, I could even join in family prayer at times.

During my separation from my family, I quickly saw the blessings of following the guidance of the prophet. I also found that creating a home of gospel learning is possible even when I was half a world away! ■