

What Sweeping Taught Me about Parenthood

By Kamri Melaine Webster

My children's chores helped answer my prayer.

I woke up one morning feeling overwhelmed. My duties as a parent felt heavy, and I was very aware of my weaknesses. There seemed to be a large gap between how I imagined I'd be as a parent and how I really am.

I knelt to pray and told Heavenly Father how much I love Him. I told Him how much I love the children He has blessed our family with. And I began telling Him how I was trying to be a good parent, but felt like I wasn't doing a good enough job. As I prayed, I thought about how much better my children would be if God just raised them Himself.

Then an image came to mind. I pictured my children sweeping the kitchen floor. This is one of many jobs they are assigned to do to help our family. Sometimes watching them do it makes me cringe because they are still learning and miss lots of spots. But I let them do it, as well as other daily chores, because I have a greater vision for them. I know that through all of this imperfect practice, they will learn and grow. Eventually, they will be able to do it just as quickly and effectively as I can. That vision of them



becoming responsible and independent is much more rewarding than if I were to do everything myself. I'm not raising children for short-term success—I'm trying to help them be successful in the long run.

And I wondered if perhaps something like this is true for our heavenly parents too. Heavenly Father knows we can't do a perfect job of being parents. Some things we do probably make *Him* cringe, but He allows it because He knows we are learning and growing. He has the ultimate long-term perspective. He envisions us someday becoming a parent like Him, able to love completely, teach effectively, and model perfectly. As we fumble, He knows we are developing qualities like patience and charity. And so, in His wisdom, He lets us work and fail and try again.

How I wish I could be a perfect parent already! Like Joseph Smith wrote, I often find myself falling “into many foolish errors” (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). But I find comfort in knowing that God understands my heart, which means He knows I am trying to be teachable. I feel



joy when my children ask, “How can I do this better?” and seem to want to improve. At least I can be that way for Heavenly Father.

As all of these thoughts played through my mind, I had one more moment of discouragement. “But what if my parenting mistakes hurt my children?” I asked. “I don’t want to hold them back, even if I become something wonderful in the process.”

Again, the image of my children’s cleaning came to mind. After my daughter earnestly tries to mop the floor and then hurries off to play or finish another task, I usually wash the remaining sticky spots. And I thought of the infinite mercy and power of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement covers every one of life’s sticky situations. His grace makes up for my shortcomings as a parent, just as His grace makes up for the pains my children suffer because of my shortcomings.

In a way that none of us can comprehend, His Atonement can heal *all* of it.

I take great comfort in the personal revelation I received that day. I felt the Spirit teach me that my best efforts, in partnership with the Lord, are enough. I know that Heavenly Father will continue working in the lives of my children, little by little, to perfectly do what I so imperfectly do. With His help, my children can someday shine in their own right, just as brightly as if Heavenly Father had raised them the first time. Except His plan also manages to change me in the process—sanctifying and molding me to become more like Him. How great the wisdom of our God! ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



DIVINE HELP

“We can, with Heavenly Father and our Savior’s help, become more patient, thoughtful, helpful, forgiving, and understanding as we pray for help. With Their help, we can make our homes a little bit of heaven here on earth.”

President M. Russell Ballard,
“Family Councils,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 65.