

It Made Us a Family

Six ways we made meaningful family home evenings.

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It has been my experience that there is no problem so great that a family firmly founded on gospel principles cannot successfully endure or overcome it. It is in this light that my husband and I have come to know the

tremendous power of successful family home evenings. As we put effort into making each home evening an enjoyable and meaningful experience, we are laying a foundation for the building of a happy home.

About a year after my husband and I were

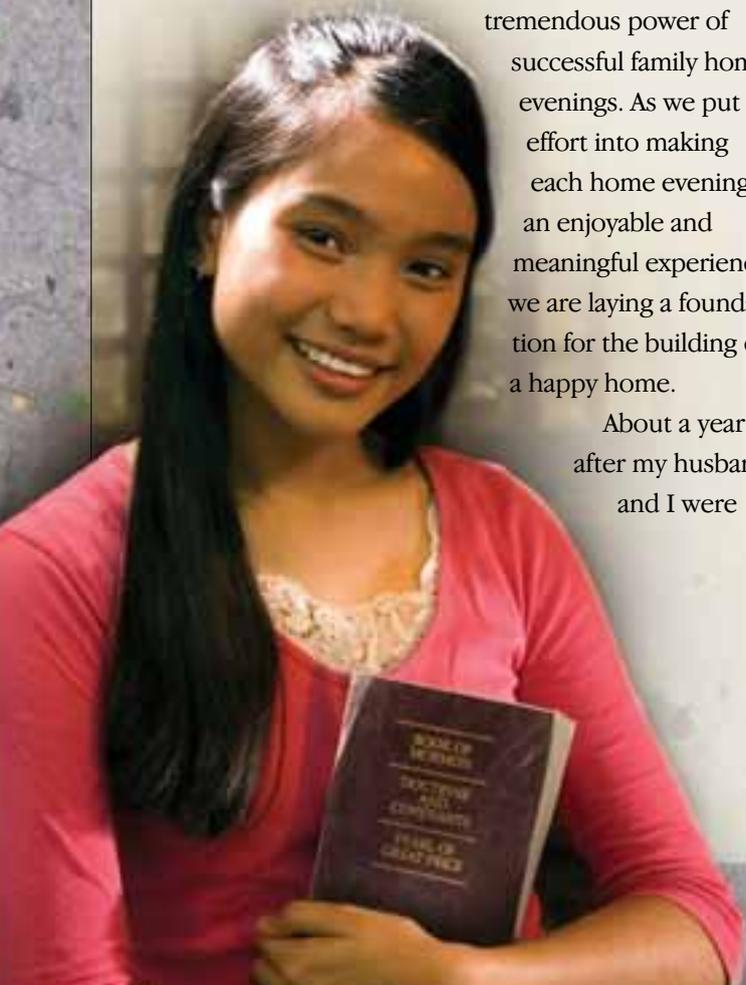
married, my youngest brother's three daughters came to live with us. My husband's youngest sister and a girlfriend of mine also asked if they could stay with us for a while, and since we didn't have any children, we welcomed all of them. Suddenly we were no longer just a couple; we were a large family.

Prior to this time, my husband and I were not too serious about holding home evenings because it was just the two of us, but with the new additions to our family, we decided to implement the program earnestly in our home.

From our first family home evening together, our Mondays were never the same, nor will our lives be the same, because of those wonderful experiences. Our usually quiet home started to be filled with music. The children who couldn't read started to learn and developed a love for it. Those who were shy and hesitant to accept assignments developed confidence and showed eagerness to contribute, even volunteering to do special presentations. There was excitement throughout the week as everyone talked about what we had done the previous Monday night and what we were going to do the next one. Excitement would build as Monday neared and as family members were busy making preparations for their "big surprises."

The promise of an exciting home evening even became a motivation for all to do their assigned household chores. Each home evening brought insights and discoveries that enriched our lives.

Following are some ideas that helped make our family home evenings successful and effective:





1 Plan. We had regular family meetings to decide our weekly themes and agreed to have a three-month calendar.

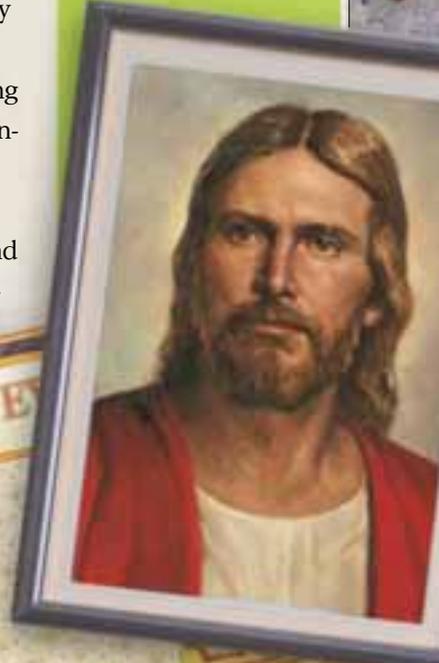
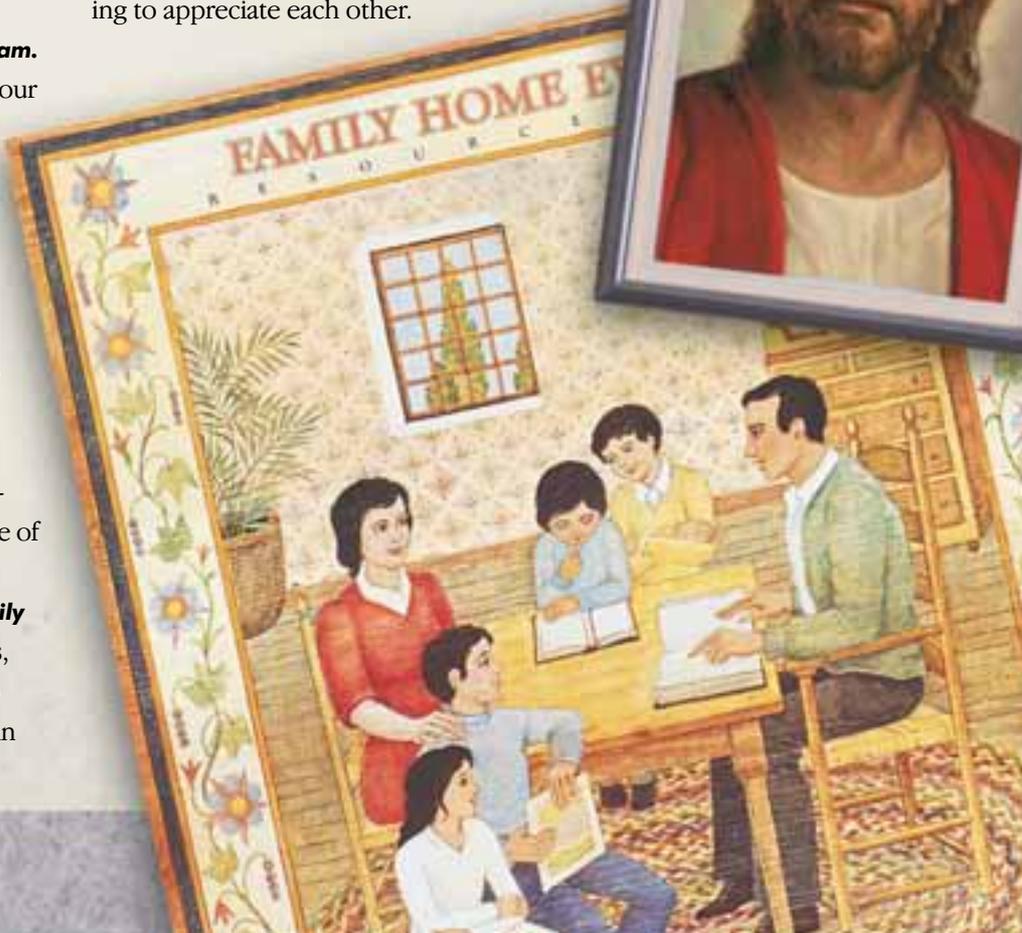
2 Involve everyone. Each person had an assignment, from planning the themes and activities to assigning lessons to being the week's home evening leader. The shy and hesitant ones were given special encouragement and assistance to ensure they successfully accomplished assigned tasks and to help them recognize the value of their contribution to home evening.

3 Create a structured but flexible program. We kept a notebook where we wrote our weekly themes and noted what happened during each home evening. This helped us remember the lessons, games, activities, and themes we had already done and made it easy for us to follow up on previous assignments. It was the responsibility of the person conducting to announce the coming week's theme and ensure assignments for the next home evening were given and noted in the notebook. This person also reminded everyone of his or her part in the next home evening.

4 Meet the needs and interests of family members. Themes, lessons, activities, and even games were carefully chosen to address specific family needs and maintain interest throughout the evening. All the

elements were thoughtfully linked together to reinforce the objectives for the evening. In the beginning, my husband and I ensured every activity was linked to the theme and objective, but soon even our youngest family member picked this up.

For example, after a lesson titled "Showing Appreciation for Our Family," the person conducting asked us to sit in a circle and listen to kind words of appreciation expressed by everyone. We then formed groups of two and listed the benefits we could gain from learning to appreciate each other.





Involve everyone in all parts of family home evening, from planning to leading.

5 Be consistent and committed.

Perhaps one of the biggest factors in the success of our home evenings was our consistency in having them and including everyone. We always communicated our willingness to help anyone at any time. Throughout the week we would watch for those needing help, and we took time to see how we could assist them. If there were recommendations or requests that we agreed to implement in the coming days, we helped by posting reminders on walls and creating checklists.

6 Use available resources. We had materials, reference manuals, and other resources available in our family library such as the *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (item no. 31106)

and other Church manuals, game books, idea books, the scriptures, and Church



magazines.

We also stocked various office supplies for everyone to use for activities.

My husband and I also found that family home evening is an effective tool for addressing family issues in a nonthreatening way. There was no reprimanding, blaming, nagging, or ridiculing. It was a time to communicate love, develop skills, infuse values, build confidence, increase knowledge, and teach eternal principles. By consistently making a united effort to hold home evenings, our family was blessed.

My nieces have since returned to their father, my sister-in-law has moved out on her own, and my girlfriend now lives in a dorm close to the school she's attending. We're back to being just a couple again. But we are still having those fun-filled, meaningful home evenings. Sometimes we invite other families to join us, and other times we take pleasure

in just getting to know each other better, working out our problems together, and expressing our appreciation for each other.

Our themes and activities continue to be simple and focused on meeting our needs.

We have no doubt that family home evening is an inspired program. Each meaningful home evening is a building block that adds to the fortification against the forces that seek to destroy happy and successful families. ■

