

PARENTS AND CHILDREN:

Elder Ballard shares ideas on how daughters and sons can build better relationships with their mothers and fathers.



Listening, Learning, and Loving

TO FATHERS AND SONS

There is no other relationship quite like that which can and should exist between a boy and his dad. It can be one of the most nurturing, joyful relationships in life, one that can have a profound impact on who boys and dads become. Now, I understand that some of you young men do not have fathers with whom you can have these kinds of conversations. And some of you men do not have sons or have lost your sons to accident or illness. But much of what I say will apply to uncles and grandfathers and priesthood leaders and other mentors who sometimes fill the gaps for these significant father-son relationships.

I know that father-son relationships are never perfect, but everything I am going to suggest to you is possible if you will put in the effort to make it happen.

Young men, you are your father's pride and joy. In you they see a promising future and their hope for a better, improved version of themselves. Your accomplishments are a joy to them. Your worries and problems are their worries and problems.

Sons

Young men, with these three simple suggestions you can take full advantage of your relationship with your dad and make your relationship with your father better than it is right now.

1. *Trust your father.*

He is not perfect, but he loves you and would never do anything he didn't think was in your best interest. So talk to him. Share your thoughts and feelings, your dreams and your fears. The more he knows about your life, the better chance he has to understand your concerns and to give you good counsel. When you put your trust in your dad, he will feel the responsibility of that trust and try harder than ever to understand and to help. As your father, he is entitled to inspiration on your behalf. His advice to you will be the heartfelt expressions of someone who knows and loves you. Your dad wants more than anything for you to be happy and successful, so why would you not want to trust someone like that?

2. *Take an interest in your father's life.*

Ask about his job, his interests, his goals. How did he decide to do the work that he does? What was he like when he was your age? How did he meet your mother? And as you learn more about him, you may find that his experiences help you to better understand why he responds the way that he does. Watch your dad. Watch how he treats your mother. Watch how he performs his Church callings. Watch how he interacts with other people. You will be surprised what you learn about him just by watching him and listening to him. Think about what you don't know



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about him and find out. Your love, admiration, and understanding will increase by what you learn.

3. Ask your father for advice.

Let's be honest: he is probably going to give you his advice whether you ask for it or not, but it just works so much better when you ask! Ask for his advice on Church activity, on classes, on friends, on school, on dating, on sports or other hobbies. Ask for his counsel on your Church assignments, on preparing for your mission, on decisions or choices you have to make. Nothing shows respect for another person as much as asking for his advice, because what you are really saying is, "I appreciate what you know and the experiences you have had, and I value your ideas and suggestions." Those are nice things for a father to hear from his son.

In my experience, fathers who are asked for advice try harder to give good, sound, useful counsel. By asking your father for advice, you not only receive the benefit of his input, but you also provide him with a little extra motivation to strive to be a better father and a better man.

Fathers

Here are some things you can do to enhance your relationship with your sons.

1. Listen to your sons—really listen to them.

Ask the right kind of questions, and listen to what your sons have to say each time you have a few minutes together. You need to know—not to guess but to know—what is going on in your son's life. Your sons live in a very different world from the one in which you grew up. As they share with you what's

going on, you will have to listen very carefully and without being judgmental in order to understand what they are thinking and experiencing.

2. Pray with and for your sons.

Give them priesthood blessings. A son who is worried about a big exam or a special event will surely benefit from a father's priesthood blessing. Occasions like the start of a new school year, a birthday, or as he begins to date may be opportune times to call upon the Lord to bless your son. One-on-one prayer and the sharing of testimonies can draw you closer to each other as well as closer to the Lord.

3. Dare to have the "big talks" with your sons.

You know what I mean: talks about drugs and drinking, about the dangers of today's media—the Internet, cyber technologies, and pornography—and about priesthood worthiness, respect for girls, and moral cleanliness. While these should not be the only subjects you talk about with your sons, please don't shy away from them. Your boys need your counsel, guidance, and input on these subjects.

I am especially concerned that we communicate openly and clearly with our sons about sexual matters. Your sons are growing up in a world that openly embraces and flaunts early, casual, and thoughtless promiscuity. Your sons simply cannot avoid the blatant sexual imagery, messages, and enticements that are all around them. Fathers and Church leaders need to have open and frequent discussions that teach and clarify how young men of the priesthood handle this issue. Be positive about how wonderful

and beautiful physical intimacy can be when it happens within the bounds the Lord has set, including temple covenants and commitments of eternal marriage. Studies show that the biggest deterrent to casual sexual activity is a wholesome attitude that connects such personal relationships with genuine commitment and mature love.

TO MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Mothers and daughters play a critical role in helping each other explore their infinite possibilities, despite the undermining influences of a world in which womanhood and motherhood are being corrupted and manipulated.

Sisters, we, your brethren, cannot do what you were divinely designated to do from before the foundation of the world. We may

try, but we cannot ever hope to replicate your unique gifts. There is nothing in this world as personal, as nurturing, or as life changing as the influence of a righteous woman.

I understand that some of you young women do not have mothers with whom you can discuss these issues. And many of you women do not presently have daughters in your lives. But because all women have within their divine nature both the inherent talent and the stewardship to mother, most of what I will say applies equally to grandmothers, aunts, sisters, stepmothers, mothers-in-law, leaders, and other mentors who sometimes fill the gaps for these significant mother-daughter relationships.

Young women, your mothers adore you. They see in you the promise of future

Young women, your mothers adore you. They see in you the promise of future generations. Everything you accomplish, every challenge you overcome brings them pure joy. And likewise your worries and heartaches are their worries and heartaches.



Three things you can do to make your relationship with your parents better than it is right now:

1. *Trust your parents*
2. *Take an interest in their lives*
3. *Ask your parents for advice*

generations. Everything you accomplish, every challenge you overcome brings them pure joy. And likewise your worries and heartaches are their worries and heartaches.

I wish to give you young women some suggestions on how to take full advantage of your relationship with your mother. And then I have a few thoughts to share with mothers about how they can maximize their influence with their daughters.

Daughters

It is, unfortunately, all too easy to illustrate the confusion and distortion of womanhood in contemporary society. Immodest, immoral, intemperate women jam the airwaves, monopolize magazines, and slink across movie screens—all while being celebrated by the world. Popular culture today often makes women look silly, inconsequential, mindless, and powerless. It objectifies them and disrespects them and then suggests that they are able to leave their mark on mankind only by seduction—easily the most pervasively dangerous message the adversary sends to women about themselves.

And so, my dear young women, with all my heart I urge you not to look to contemporary culture for your role models and mentors. Please look to your faithful mothers for a pattern to follow. Model yourselves after them, not after celebrities whose standards are not the Lord's standards and whose values may not reflect an eternal perspective. Look to your mother. Learn from her strengths, her courage, and her faithfulness. Listen to her. She may not be a whiz at texting; she may not even have a Facebook page. But when it comes to matters of the heart and the things of the Lord, she has a wealth of knowledge. As you approach the

time for marriage and young motherhood, she will be your greatest source of wisdom. No other person on earth loves you in the same way or is willing to sacrifice as much to encourage you and help you find happiness—in this life and forever.

Love your mother, my young sisters. Respect her. Listen to her. Trust her. She has your best interests at heart. She cares about your eternal safety and happiness. So be kind to her. Be patient with her imperfections, for she has them. We all do.

Mothers

Teach your daughters to find joy in nurturing children. This is where their love and talents can have the greatest eternal significance. Consider in this context President Harold B. Lee's injunction that "the most important . . . work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own homes" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 134).

Mothers, teach your daughters that a faithful daughter of God avoids the temptation to gossip or judge one another.

Your daughters as well as your sons are coming of age in a world that openly embraces early, casual, and thoughtless promiscuity. Immodest, unchaste women are glamorized and all too often celebrated and emulated. You need to have frequent, open discussions during which you teach your daughters the truth about these issues.

All youth will be more likely to make and keep covenants if they learn how to recognize the presence and the voice of the Spirit. Teach your daughters about things of the Spirit. Point them to the scriptures. Give them experiences that will help them cherish the blessing of priesthood power in their lives.

Through keeping covenants they will learn to hear the voice of the Lord and receive personal revelation. God will truly hear and answer their prayers.

Conclusion

I hope you are listening and see a pattern and hear a steady, consistent message that in these last days it is essential—even critical—that parents and children listen to and learn from one another. These are not just ethereal concepts about which I have been speaking. They are the essence, the center, of God’s plan for our eternal happiness and peace.

The Church will help wherever we can. We are there to support and sustain you as parents and as children. But the home is the most important place to prepare the youth of today to lead the families and the Church of tomorrow. It rests upon each one of us as mothers and fathers to do all we can to prepare our youth to be faithful, righteous men and women. It is in the home where we must teach the gospel by precept and by example. **NE**

Excerpted from general conference talks given in October 2009 and April 2010.

NEmore

Go to youth.lds.org to see videos that illustrate the principles Elder Ballard taught. Look for “Mothers and Daughters” and “Fathers and Sons” under Videos.

DUTY TO GOD AND PERSONAL PROGRESS



Consider inviting your mother or father to work with you side by side on Duty to God or on Personal Progress. Working together with your parent will give you a chance to show them how you are striving to improve yourself; it will also allow you to see that your parents are trying to better themselves too. You can become closer to your mother or father as you encourage one another in setting and achieving worthy goals.

