



Preserve and Protect the Family

*“Home may seem commonplace at times
with its routine duties, yet its success should
be the greatest of all our pursuits.”*

From the Life of Howard W. Hunter

Howard W. Hunter grew up in a loving, hard-working family, where he learned from his parents that building a happy home often required sacrifice. Shortly before he was married, he made a sacrifice that he felt was necessary for the well-being of his future family.

Howard had developed a love for music at a young age. He first learned to play the piano and violin and then taught himself to play many other instruments. As a teenager, he formed his own band, Hunter’s Croonaders, which played at dances and other events around Boise, Idaho. When he was 19, he and his band were hired to provide music for a two-month cruise to Asia.¹

The year after Howard returned from the cruise, he moved to Southern California, where he continued to play with various bands. In California he also met Claire Jeffs, to whom he proposed marriage in the spring of 1931. Four days before they were married, Howard performed with his band and then packed up his instruments and never played again professionally. Providing music for dances and parties “was glamorous in some respects,” he said, “and I made good money,” but he felt that parts of the lifestyle were incompatible with the kind of life he envisioned for his family. “This left a void of something I had enjoyed, [but] the decision has never been regretted,” he said years later.²

Howard and Claire were blessed with three sons, Howard William (Billy), John, and Richard. To their sorrow, Billy died as an infant. As John and Richard grew, the Hunters built a close-knit family.



The family “transcends every other interest in life.”

Howard had a full schedule with his law practice and Church callings, but he and Claire made their family a priority. Long before the Church designated Monday night for family home evening, the Hunters set aside that night as a time for teaching the gospel, telling stories, playing games, and going places together. Often the boys were given assignments for the lessons.

Howard and his sons developed common interests, such as model trains. They built the trains from kits and constructed an elaborate railroad with tracks attached to sheets of plywood. He recalled, “One of our favorite pastimes was to go to the railroad yards . . . near the Alhambra station of the Southern Pacific Railroad to get ideas for our switchyards and equipment.”³

Eventually President and Sister Hunter’s family grew to include 18 grandchildren. In addition to extended visits with his children and grandchildren, many of President Hunter’s visits were “on the run,” during layovers when Church assignments took him through California. Because John often took his children to the airport to see their grandfather during these layovers, they sometimes referred to him as “the grandpa who lives at the airport.”⁴

Teachings of Howard W. Hunter



The family is the most important unit in society, in the Church, and in eternity.

The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity and, as such, transcends every other interest in life.⁵

The Church has the responsibility—and the authority—to preserve and protect the family as the foundation of society. The pattern for family life, instituted from before the foundation of the world, provides for children to be born to and nurtured by a father and mother who are husband and wife, lawfully married. Parenthood is a sacred obligation and privilege, with children welcomed as a “heritage of the Lord” (Ps. 127:3).

A worried society now begins to see that the disintegration of the family brings upon the world the calamities foretold by the prophets. The world’s councils and deliberations will succeed only when



President Hunter with his sons, grandchildren, and their families on October 2, 1994, the day after he was sustained as President of the Church

they define the family as the Lord has revealed it to be. “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Ps. 127:1).⁶

In seeking after the welfare of individuals and families, it is important to remember that the basic unit of the Church is the family. However, in focusing on the family we should remember that in the world in which we live, families are not restricted to the traditional grouping of father, mother, and children. Families in the Church today also consist of [husbands and wives] without children, single parents with children, and single individuals living alone. . . . Each of these families must receive priesthood watch care. Often those which may need the most careful watch care are those families of the non-traditional structure. Caring and committed home teachers are needed in each home. None should be neglected.⁷



Parents are partners in the leadership of the home and are under strict obligation to protect and love their children.

The responsibilities of parenthood are of the greatest importance. The results of our efforts will have eternal consequences for us and the boys and girls we raise. Anyone who becomes a parent is

under strict obligation to protect and love [their] children and assist them to return to their Heavenly Father. All parents should understand that the Lord will not hold guiltless those who neglect these responsibilities.⁸

Fathers and mothers have a great responsibility with respect to the children which are entrusted to their care. . . . In the Book of Proverbs we find this admonition to parents:

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6.)

The greatest training that can be given to a child is that which comes from the example of parents. Parents need to set the example for young people to follow. Great strength comes from the home where righteous principles are taught, where there is love and respect for each other, where prayer has been an influence in the family life, and where there is respect for those things that pertain to God.⁹

Effective family leadership . . . requires both quantity and quality time. The teaching and governance of the family must not be left . . . to society, to school, or even the Church.¹⁰

A man who holds the priesthood regards the family as ordained of God. Your leadership of the family is your most important and sacred responsibility. . . .

A man who holds the priesthood leads his family in Church participation so they will know the gospel and be under the protection of the covenants and ordinances. If you are to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, you must set your own homes in order. Together with your wife, you determine the spiritual climate of your home. Your first obligation is to get your own spiritual life in order through regular scriptural study and daily prayer. Secure and honor your priesthood and temple covenants; encourage your family to do the same.¹¹

A man who holds the priesthood has reverence for motherhood. Mothers are given a sacred privilege to “bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of [the] Father continued, that he may be glorified” (D&C 132:63).

. . . The priesthood cannot work out its destiny, nor can God's purposes be fulfilled, without our helpmates. Mothers perform a labor the priesthood cannot do. For this gift of life, the priesthood should have love unbounded for the mothers of their children.

[Brethren,] honor your wife's unique and divinely appointed role as a mother in Israel and her special capacity to bear and nurture children. We are under divine commandment to multiply and replenish the earth and to bring up our children and grandchildren in light and truth (see Moses 2:28; D&C 93:40). You share, as a loving partner, the care of the children. Help her to manage and keep up your home. Help teach, train, and discipline your children.

You should express regularly to your wife and children your reverence and respect for her. Indeed, one of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother.¹²

A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. Of necessity there must be in the Church and in the home a presiding officer (see D&C 107:21). By divine appointment, the responsibility to preside in the home rests upon the priesthood holder (see Moses 4:22). The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership. Presiding in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate independent of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion.¹³

We encourage you, brethren, to remember that priesthood is a righteous authority only. Earn the respect and confidence of your children through your loving relationship with them. A righteous father protects his children with his time and presence in their social, educational, and spiritual activities and responsibilities. Tender expressions of love and affection toward children are as much the responsibility of the father as the mother. Tell your children you love them.¹⁴

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**Our homes should be places of love,
prayer, and gospel teaching.**

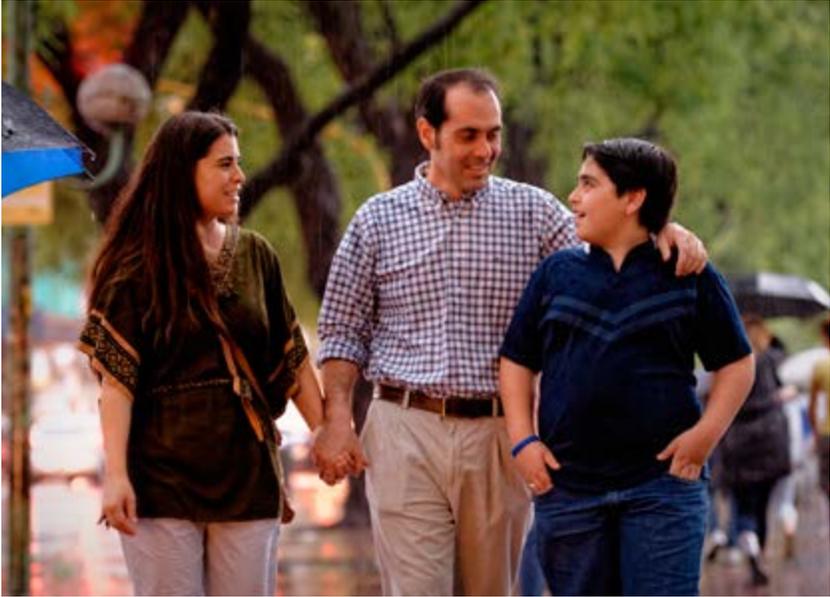
We simply must have love and integrity and strong principles in our homes. We must have an abiding commitment to marriage and children and morality. We must succeed where success counts most for the next generation.

Surely that home is strongest and most beautiful in which we find each person sensitive to the feelings of others, striving to serve others, striving to live at home the principles we demonstrate in more public settings. We need to try harder to live the gospel in our family circles. Our homes deserve our most faithful commitments. A child has the right to feel that in his home he is safe, that there he has a place of protection from the dangers and evils of the outside world. Family unity and integrity are necessary to supply this need. A child needs parents who are happy in their relationship to each other, who are working happily toward the fulfillment of ideal family living, who love their children with a sincere and unselfish love, and who are committed to the family's success.¹⁵

When family home evenings were first introduced as an official program of the Church, the First Presidency said, "If the Saints obey this counsel [to hold family home evenings], we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them." We reaffirm the promised blessings to those who faithfully hold family home evenings.

Monday evenings should be reserved for family home evening. Local leaders should ensure that Church buildings and facilities are closed, that no ward or stake activities are planned for Monday evenings, and that other interruptions to family home evenings be avoided.

The primary emphasis of family home evening should be for families to be together to study the gospel. We remind all that the Lord has admonished parents to teach their children the gospel, to



“We must be prayerful and . . . let our children know of our love and concern.”

influence of the gospel. These Saints have enjoyed the great blessings and comfort that can come from looking back, as parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, over long and successful parenting efforts. Surely this is something each of us would like.

However, there are many in the Church and in the world who are living with feelings of guilt and unworthiness because some of their sons and daughters have wandered or strayed from the fold. . . .

. . . We understand that conscientious parents try their best, yet nearly all have made mistakes. One does not launch into such a project as parenthood without soon realizing that there will be many errors along the way. Surely our Heavenly Father knows, when he entrusts his spirit children into the care of young and inexperienced parents, that there will be mistakes and errors in judgment. . . .

. . . Each of us is unique. Each child is unique. Just as each of us starts at a different point in the race of life, and just as each of us has different strengths and weaknesses and talents, so each child is blessed with his own special set of characteristics. We must not

assume that the Lord will judge the success of one in precisely the same way as another. As parents we often assume that, if our child doesn't become an overachiever in every way, we have failed. We should be careful in our judgments. . . .

A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent. Perhaps there are children who have come into the world that would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. Likewise, perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother.

My concern today is that there are parents who may be pronouncing harsh judgments upon themselves and may be allowing these feelings to destroy their lives, when in fact they have done their best and should continue in faith.²⁰

A father or mother [whose child has strayed] is not alone. Our first parents knew the pain and suffering of seeing some of their children reject the teachings of eternal life. (See Moses 5:27.) Centuries later Jacob came to know of the jealousy and ill feelings of his older sons toward his beloved Joseph. (See Gen. 37:1–8.) The great prophet Alma, who had a son named Alma, prayed at length to the Lord regarding the rebellious attitude of his son and no doubt was overwhelmed with concern and worry about the dissension and the wickedness his son was causing among those who were within the Church. (See Mosiah 27:14.) Our Father in Heaven has also lost many of his spirit children to the world; he knows the feelings of your heart. . . .

. . . Don't give up hope for a boy or a girl who has strayed. Many who have appeared to be completely lost have returned. We must be prayerful and, if possible, let our children know of our love and concern. . . .

. . . Know that our Heavenly Father will recognize the love and the sacrifice, the worry and the concern, even though our great effort has been unsuccessful. Parents' hearts are oftentimes broken,

yet they must realize that the ultimate responsibility lies with the child after parents have taught correct principles.

. . . Whatever the sorrow, whatever the concern, whatever the pain and anguish, look for a way to turn it to beneficial use—perhaps in helping others to avoid the same problems, or perhaps by developing a greater insight into the feelings of others who are struggling in a similar way. Surely we will have a deeper understanding of the love of our Heavenly Father when, through prayer, we finally come to know that he understands and wants us to look forward. . . .

We should never let Satan fool us into thinking that all is lost. Let us take pride in the good and right things we have done; reject and cast out of our lives those things that are wrong; look to the Lord for forgiveness, strength, and comfort; and then move onward.²¹



**Our homes should be holy places where the
principles of the gospel can be lived and
where the Spirit of the Lord can dwell.**

We hope that you will not be overcome with discouragement in your attempts to raise your families in righteousness. Remember that the Lord has commanded this: “But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved” (D&C 45:32).

While some interpret this to mean the temple, which surely it does, it also represents the homes in which we live. If you will diligently work to lead your families in righteousness, encouraging and participating in daily family prayer, scripture reading, family home evening, and love and support for each other in living the teachings of the gospel, you will receive the promised blessings of the Lord in raising a righteous posterity.

In an increasingly wicked world, how essential it is that each of us “stand in holy places” and commit to be true and faithful to the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.²²

To reach success in the family, parents must have love and respect for each other. Husbands, the bearers of the priesthood, should hold their wives in the highest esteem before their children,

and wives should love and support their husbands. In return, the children will have love for their parents and for each other. The home will then become a hallowed place where the principles of the gospel can be best lived and where the Spirit of the Lord can dwell. To be a successful father or a successful mother is far greater than to rise to leadership or high places in business, government, or worldly affairs. Home may seem commonplace at times with its routine duties, yet its success should be the greatest of all our pursuits in life.²³

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Questions

- As you review President Hunter’s teachings in section 1, consider the importance of the family. What is the responsibility of the Church for the family? How can we protect and strengthen our families?
- Ponder President Hunter’s teachings about parents being partners in the leadership of the home (see section 2). How can these teachings help both fathers and mothers? How can parents become united in raising their children? Consider how you might improve the “spiritual climate” of your home.
- In section 3, President Hunter gives advice for establishing a strong family. How can we build greater “family unity and integrity”? How has family home evening blessed your family? How have family scripture study and family prayer blessed your family?
- How might President Hunter’s teachings in section 4 help parents of a child who has strayed? How can parents who are experiencing sorrow and pain turn that to beneficial use? What can parents, grandparents, youth leaders, and others do to help children who go astray?
- After reading section 5, reflect on President Hunter’s teachings about making our homes “holy places.” What are some challenges we face in doing this? How can we strive to make our homes holy places?

Related Scriptures

Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4–7; Psalm 127:3–5; Ephesians 6:1–4; Enos 1:1–3; Mosiah 4:14–15; Alma 56:45–48; 3 Nephi 18:21; D&C 68:25–28; 93:40; 121:41–46

Teaching Help

Ask class members to work in pairs and plan how they would teach a section of the chapter in a family home evening. How could we make the teachings relevant to children and youth? Invite some of the pairs to share their plans with the class.

Notes

1. See Eleanor Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter* (1994), 46–48.
2. In Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter*, 81.
3. In Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter*, 109.
4. In Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter*, 252; see also 251.
5. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50.
6. “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 9.
7. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 144.
8. “Parents’ Concern for Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 65.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1960, 125.
10. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” 50.
11. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” 50, 51.
12. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” 50.
13. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” 50–51.
14. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” 51.
15. “Standing As Witnesses of God,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 61–62.
16. First Presidency letter, Aug. 30, 1994 (Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson).
17. In Mike Cannon, “‘Be More Fully Converted,’ Prophet Says,” *Church News*, Sept. 24, 1994, 4; see also *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 37.
18. In Conference Report, Apr. 1960, 125–26.
19. “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” 51.
20. “Parents’ Concern for Children,” 63, 64–65.
21. “Parents’ Concern for Children,” 64, 65.
22. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 155.
23. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 156.